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The Advent

1954

*My Lord, here is Thy advice to all, for
this year:*

*"Never boast about anything, let your
acts speak for you."*

THE MOTHER

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He who acquires for himself alone, acquires ill though he
may call it heaven and virtue.

SRI AUROBINDO

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There is always a great difference between what people are and do and what they ought to be and do. The Consciousness is quite aware of this and is constantly working to rectify and to change but it does not work on separate points in a spasmodic way. It works on the whole in a total and all-comprehensive way. The advance seems slow but it is more complete and nothing is forgotten.

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If earnestly you say to the Divine, "I want only Thee",
the Divine will arrange the circumstances in such a way
that you are compelled to be sincere.

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If you are truly surrendered to the Divine, in the right manner and totally, then at every moment you will be what you ought to be, you will do what you ought to do, you will know what you ought to know.

But for that you should have transcended all the limitations of the ego:

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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - Sri Aurobindo.

EDITORIALS*

THE SPIRAL UNIVERSE

EVOOLUTION does not proceed in a straight line, but in a spiral. That is to say, it is not a constant progress in one direction, but consists of progression, regression and an ultimate progression. The spiral movement means that all things must enter into the phenomenon of evolution, so that it is not one thing only that progresses and others remain behind but that all move forward—all move forward but at different speeds and also from different starting-points. And they move not straight as the crow flies, but in a circle like the soaring eagle. When you concentrate upon one point of the circle, you will see relatively to it many others not advancing at all but receding and the point itself will seem at times to be going back towards a position already left behind. One goes back to pick up certain elements that have not been included in the progress, not properly dealt with. It happens usually that when you progress in one thing, you forget

¹ Based on the Mother's talks

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another; so you have to turn back and take up the neglected element. Thus you have to go round and round, as it were, until you include the totality of your being, even embrace the totality of the universe. When you have, however, gathered the bypassed factor and come back to the original position from where you seemed to have regressed, you find that you are not exactly at the same point but at a corresponding point on a higher plane. That forms a spiral, not merely a circle.

There are, in the universe, an infinite number of points moving, each forming a spiral; so there are an infinite number of spirals. And these spirals do not lie only side by side, but cross each other and thus give an aspect of contrariness and contradictoriness. So if you wish to take a total view of the movement of universal progress, you will be somewhat puzzled. There are so many lines that advance and there are so many which recede at the same time. Some come into the light, others go into the background and none independent or self-sufficient. There is a sort of intermingling, even coordination.

The universe can thus be conceived as a globe consisting of an infinite number of intersecting spirals. One can give to each spiral a different colour, each representing one aspect of nature's movement. A model globe of this kind may perhaps be constructed. A section only of the curve of a spiral is on the outside, the rest is within the globe and can be seen because of its special colour, provided we consider the globe as something transparent. It is these multiple sections outside that form the surface of the globe. The inside is of course full of spirals, excepting that section of a spiral which is outside. And yet though crossing and recrossing they do not form an opaque mass. One can see through and follow the brilliant lines of various colours. That is how I see it. You can try to make a geometrical figure of it, if possible.

Nature has a plan of its own. It is not like the coherent rational plan of man. Nature's plan is made of an aspiration, a decision and a goal. But the way is quite fantastic, so it appears to man. Nature seems to move from moment to moment, under the stress of the occasion; there are advances, withdrawals, trials, contradictions, demolitions of things, laborious building up, and again throwing down. It is a complete chaos. She begins a thing, leaves it half done, takes up another, rejects one thing altogether, begins anew something left off, makes, remakes, unmakes, separates, mixes up. She follows a million lines of advance at the same time but not from the same point and each with its own speed and rhythm. There is such a tangle that seems to make no sense. Still there is a plan, she pursues an object

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

which seems to be very clear to her, although veiled to the human eye. The spiral globe I spoke of was meant to give some idea of this complex unity in Nature's plan.

You can bring in a better order, with less waste and more efficiency a more conscious organisation. But for that man must change his own inner organisation first. In his own consciousness and being he must bring out a new order, a new cosmos.

28-10-1953.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

God has created the world, the material world as it is? Yes and No, more "No" than "Yes". For he has not created it directly. There have been many creators, rather *formateurs*, form-makers, in between the world and God, who joined in the work of creation. Who are they? They have been given various names. Creation generally follows a principle of gradation. It is done step by step, world rising out of world successively. Each world is a particular state of being, a particular mode of consciousness. Each state is inhabited by entities, individualities, personalities and each one has created a world around him or assisted in the creation of certain types or species upon earth. The last of these creators or Fashioners are those of the vital. At the top are those of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind. It was these that created, that is to say, gave the first form to earthly beings and things. They sent out their emanations and these again theirs in their turn and so on. Thus it was not the Divine Will which acted directly upon Matter and gave the world the form it could or should have had. There are layers and planes, graded intermediaries through which the Will has had to act. I spoke of the overmental and the vital plane. There is also the mental plane between them. There are mental beings who are also creators, giving form to some beings that have taken body upon earth.

Thus, there is a tradition which says that the world of insects is the outcome of the creators of the vital world. That is why when you see the insects under a microscope they take on appearances that are absolutely diabolical. Enlarged on a screen they look like veritable monsters, so terrifying they are. Microscopic monsters they are. So it is said, beings of the vital world thought of amusing themselves and created these impossible beasts making human existence uncomfortable.

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You can of course ask how these intermediaries themselves came into being, not out of the Divine? Intermediaries come out of other still higher and higher intermediaries till the chain reaches the Supreme. Originally, that is to say, if you trace back to the original source, there is there, of course, only the Divine. Then how has the deformation come in? I explained to you once that if you do not remain one with the Divine, under his direct influence, do not follow the movement of creation or expansion exactly as the Divine wills, this rupture of contact is sufficient to bring about the greatest evil of all, division. Even the most luminous, the most powerful beings may decide to follow their own movement instead of obeying the divine movement. They may be in themselves marvellous beings, and human beings, if they saw them, would take them for the Divine himself, yet they can, since they follow their own will and work not in harmony with the universe, be the source of the greatest disorders. There is nothing that is not the Divine, only there comes about a disorder, that is to say, each thing is not in its proper place. The problem is, this has to be remedied.

As to the question why this deviation, this evil at all, I can say, first of all, what you call evil may be only what is not convenient to you, but from the standpoint of universal arrangement that may be the most convenient. Secondly, the thing might have been just an accident, so to say, in the beginning. And what we are concerned with is not so much its why or even how but with the remedy to be found for the evil that is there. Viewing philosophically, however, we may note that the universe in which we live is evidently one movement out of many (actual and possible), that it follows its own law which is not the same elsewhere, that if the principle on which this universe has been created is that of free will, then you cannot prevent the disorderly movement from happening until a knowledge comes and illumines the choice. If one is free to choose, one may choose the wrong thing, not necessarily the right thing, for if it were decided from beforehand that the choice must be always good and in the right direction, then the choice will no longer be free.

But in reality these questions cannot be adequately answered in that way. It is a problem to which mental answers—of which the mental formulations even—only serve to diminish the dimensions of the problem; the question itself reduces the problem to a more or less elementary formula corresponding only vaguely and superficially and incompletely to the reality of things.

To be able to understand you must become. If you want to understand

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

the why and the how of the universe you must identify yourself with the universe. And that is not easy.

In truth the question itself is wrong. It is childish. It presupposes things that are themselves questionable. There are certain ideas about creation which have been almost universally current, more or less permanently accepted by human thought during ages; they are of an astounding simplicity. There is a world here, it is said, and up there somewhere there is a being called God. This person one day thought of creating some kind of thing, a visible form. The world was the result. Evidently we see a lot of mistakes in his work. We conclude the creator perhaps is a well-meaning benevolent person, but not all-powerful; some other thing or being there is that contradicts him. Or perhaps he is all-powerful but then has no heart and must be cruelty itself—viewing the condition of his creation which is a story of sorrow and trouble and misery. Such an idea, I say, is simplicity itself, the simplicity of a child brain. When one speaks of God the creator as a potter making a pot, one thinks of him as a human being, only in bigger proportions. Truly, it is not God who has made man in his image, it is man who has made God in his image.

As I say, the question is wrongly put. The very form of the question already assumes a certain notion about God and creation. Your postulates or axioms themselves are vitiated.

The universe and its creator are not separate things, they are one and identical in their origin. The universe is God himself projected into Space (and Time). So the universe is the Divine in one aspect or another. You cannot divide the two, making one the creator and the other his work, the watchmaker and his watch. You put your idea of the Divine upon him and ask, why he has created such a nasty world. If the Divine were to answer, "It is not I, it is yourself. Become myself again, you will no longer feel and see as you do now. You are not yourself, therefore your question and your problem"! Indeed when you unite your consciousness with the divine consciousness there is no longer any problem. Everything appears then natural and simple, and correct and as it should be. It is when you cut yourself from your origin and stand outside, in front of him and against him that all the trouble begins. Of course you may ask, how is it that the Divine has tolerated a part of himself going out and separating itself and creating all this disorder? I would reply on behalf of the Divine, "If you want to know, you had better unite yourself with the Divine, for that is the only way of knowing why he has done so. It is not by questioning him by your mind

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that you will get the answer. The mind cannot know. And I repeat, when you come to this identification, all problems are solved. The feeling, one can explain, that things are not all right, that they should be otherwise comes precisely from the fact that there is a divine will unfolding itself in a continuous progression, that things that were and are have to give place to things that shall be and shall be better and better than they have been. The world that was good yesterday will no longer be so tomorrow. The universe might have appeared quite harmonious in some other age but now appears quite discordant: it is because we see the possibility of a better universe. If we found it as it should be, we would not do what we have to do, we would not try to make it better. Even so, we would conceive the Divine in a very human way; for we remain imprisoned within ourselves, confined to this consciousness of ours which is like a grain of sand in the infinite immensity. You want to understand the immensity? That is not possible. It is possible only under one condition; be one with the immensity. The drop of water cannot very well ask how is the ocean: it has to lose itself into the ocean.

14-10-1953.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

A POEM

I WALKED beside the waters of a world of light
On a gold ridge guarding two seas of high-rayed night
One was divinely topped with a pale bluish moon
And swam as in a happy deep spiritual swoon
More conscious than earth's waking; the other's wide delight
Billowed towards an ardent orb of diamond white.
But where I stood, there joined in a bright marvellous haze
The mirrored moons with the ridge's golden blaze
I knew not of two wakings or two mighty sleeps
Mixed the great diamond fires and the pale pregnant deeps,
But all my glad expanding soul flowed satisfied
Around me and became the mystery of their tide.
As one who finds his own eternal self, content,
Needing naught else beneath the spirit's firmament,
I knew not Space, it heard no more Time's running feet,
Termless, fulfilled, lost richly in itself, complete.
And so it might have lain for ever. But there came
A dire intrusion wrapped in married cloud and flame,
Across the blue-white moon-hush of my magic seas
A sudden sweeping of immense peripheries
Of darkness ringing lambent lustres; shadowy-vast
A nameless dread, a Power incalculable passed
Whose feet were death, whose wings were immortality;
Its changing mind was time, its heart eternity.
All opposites were there, unreconciled, unceasing,
Struggling for victory, by victory unappeased.
All things it bore, even that which brings undying peace,
But secret, veiled, waiting for some supreme release.
I saw the spirit of the cosmic Ignorance;
I felt its power beset my gloried fields of trance.

25-4-1934

SRI AUROBINDO

A HYMN TO AGNI*

1. With all these gods, O Agni, thou who art the activity of speech, arrive and do thy work.

2. On thee, O Agni, the Kanwas have called, for thee, O master of wisdom, their movements of understanding become articulate; arrive, O Agni, with the gods.

3. On Indra and Vayu, Brihaspati, on Mitra and Agni, Pushana, Bhaga, the Adityas and the Marut host.

4. For you the nectar streams are filled in, rapturous and maddening dripping sweetness, into their vessel they settle down.

5. Thee the Kanwas protected adore, when they have manifested the flame, hold the offering and have set their array.

6. Shining of flank, yoked to the mind the bearers that bear thee and bear to us the gods to drink the Soma wine.

7. Make them active to the Yajna, O Agni, they increase by truth, they have with them their female powers; make them drink the sweetnesses, O keen of tongue.

8. Those that are active to Yajna, those that are adorable, let both of them drink with thy tongue, O Agni, the heady sweetness of the wine.

9. From the world of the lustre of the sun the seer, the priest of the offering bringeth the gods that woke to the dawn.

10. With all of them, O Agni, drink thou the sweetness of the Soma wine, with Indra and Vayu and Mitra's lustres.

11. Thou, the priest of the oblation, thinker and friend, sittest, O Agni, sittest at the Yajnas, therefore do thou set thyself to this action of sacrifice of ours.

12. Yoking, O God, in thy chariot the rosy and the green and the crimson, by these bear hither the gods.

SRI AUROBINDO

¹ *Rig Veda* I. 14

² Rishi: Medhatithi Kanwa

THE UPANISHAD IN APHORISMS*

THE ISHA UPANISHAD

FOR the Lord all this is a habitation whatsoever is moving thing in her that moves.

Why dost thou say there is a world? There is no world, only One who moves.

What thou callest world is the movement of Kali; as such embrace thy world-existence. In thy all-embracing stillness of vision thou art Purusha and inhabitest; in thy outward motion and action thou art Prakriti and the builder of the habitation. Thus envisage thy being.

There are many knots of this movement and each knot thy eyes look upon as an object; many currents and each current thy mind sees as force and tendency. Forces and objects are the forms of Kali.

To each form of her we give a name. What is this name? It is word, it is sound, it is vibration of being, the child of infinity and the father of mental idea. Before form can be, name and idea must have existed.

The half-enlightened say, "Whatever form is built, the Lord enters to inhabit;" but the Seer knows that whatever the Lord sees in His own being, becomes Idea and seeks a form and a habitation.

The universe is a rhythmic vibration in infinite existence which multiplies itself into many harmonies and holds them well ordered in the original type of motion.

Thou lookest upon a stone and sayest, "It is still". So it is, but to the sense-experience only. For the eye that sees, it is built out of motion and composed of motion. In the ordered repetition of the atomic movements that compose it, consists its appearance of stillness.

All stability is a fixed equilibrium of rhythm. Disturb the rhythm, the stability dissolves and becomes unstable.

No single rhythm can be eternally stable; therefore the universe is an ocean always in flow, and everything in it is mutable and transient. Each thing in

* Old writing

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Nature endures till the purpose of Kali in it is fulfilled; then it is dissolved and changed into a constituent of some other harmony.

Prakriti is eternal, but every universe passes. The fact of universe endures for ever, but no particular world of things can last; for each universe is only one rhythm out of an infinite number of possible movements. Whatsoever system in Nature or of Nature is thoroughly worked out, must give place to a new harmony.

Nevertheless all world and everything in world is eternal in its essential being; for all essential existence is Brahman without end or beginning.

Forms and names are also Brahman and eternal; but, in world, theirs is an eternity of recurrence, not of unbroken persistence. Every form and every idea that has once been, exists still and can again recur; every form or idea that is, to be, already exists and was from the beginning. Time is a convention of movement, not a condition of existence.

That which inhabits the forms of Kali is Self and Lord of the Movement. Purusha is master of Prakriti, not her subject; Soul determines Form and Action and is not determined by them. Spirit reflects in its knowledge the activity of Nature, but only those activities which it has itself compelled Nature to initiate.

The soul in the body is master of body and not subject to its laws or limited by its experiences.

The soul is not constituted by mind and its activities, for these also are parts of Nature and movements only.

Mind and body are instruments of the secret all-knowing and omnipotent Self within us.

The soul in the body is not limited in space by the body or in experience by the mind; the whole universe is its habitation.

There is only one Self of things, one soul in multitudinous forms. By body and mind I am separated even from my brother or my lover but by exceeding body and mind I can become one with all things in being and in experience, even with the stone and the tree.

My universal soul need no more be limited by my individual mind and body, than my individual consciousness is limited by the experiences of a single cell in my body. The walls which imprison us have been built up (by) Prakriti in her movement and exist only in her inferior kingdoms. As one rises higher they become conventional boundaries which we can always stride across and, on the summits, they merely mark off compartments in our universal consciousness.

THE UPANISHAD IN APHORISMS

The soul does not move, but motion of Nature takes place in its perfect stillness.

The motion of Nature is not real or material motion, but vibration of the soul's self-consciousness.

Nature is Chit-Shakti, the Lord's expressive power of self-awareness, by which whatever He sees in Himself, becomes in form of consciousness.

Everything in Nature is a becoming of the one Spirit who alone is Being. We and all things in Nature are God's becomings, *sarvabhūtāni*.

Although there are to world-experience multitudinous souls (Purushas) in the universe, all these are only one Purusha masked in many forms of His consciousness.

Each soul in itself is God entirely, every group of souls is collectively God; the modalities of Nature's movement create their separation and outward differences.

God transcends world and is not bound by any law of Nature. He uses laws, laws do not use Him.

God transcends world and is not bound to any particular state of consciousness in the world. He is not unity-consciousness nor multiple consciousness, not Personality nor Impersonality, not stillness nor motion, but simultaneously includes all these self-expressions of His absolute being.

God simultaneously transcends world, contains it and informs it; the soul in the body can arrive at the God-consciousness and at once transcend, contain and inform its universe.

God-consciousness is not exclusive of World-consciousness; Nature is not an outcast from Spirit, but its Image, world is not a falsity contradicting Brahman, but the symbol of a divine Existence.

God is the reverse side of Nature, Nature the obverse side of God.

Since the soul in the body is eternally and inalienably free, its bondage to egoism, law of bodily nature, law of mental nature, law of pleasure and pain, law of life and death, can only be an apparent and not a real bondage. Our chains are either a play or an illusion or both play and illusion.

The secret of our apparent bondage is the Spirit's play by which It consents to forget God-consciousness in the absorption of Nature's movement.

The movement of Nature is a sevenfold flow, each stream subject to its own law of motion but containing latent, expressed or half-apparent in itself its six sisters or companions.

Nature is composed of Being, Will or Force, Creative Bliss, Pure Idea,

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Mind, Life and Matter,—Sat, Chit or Tapas, Ananda, Vijnanam, Manas, Prana and Annam.

The Soul, Purusha, can seat itself in any of these principles and, according to its situation, its outlook changes and it sees a different world; all world is merely arranged and harmonised outlook of the Spirit.

What God sees, that exists; what He sees with order and harmony, becomes a world.

There are seven worlds, Satya, of pure being, Tapas, of pure will or force, Jana, of pure delight, Mahas, of pure idea, Swara, of pure mentality, Bhuvah, of pure vitality, Bhuh, of pure matter.

The soul in Sat is pure truth of being and perceives itself as one in the world's multiplicity.

The soul in Tapas is pure force of divine will and knowledge and possesses universe omnisciently and omnipotently as its extended self.

The soul in Ananda is pure delight and multiplies itself in universal self-creation and unmixed joy of being.

The soul in Mahas is pure idea, perceives itself in order and arrangement of comprehensive unity in multiplicity, all things in their unity and each thing in its right place, time and circumstance. It is not subject to the tyranny of impressions, but contains and comprehends the objects it knows.

The soul in Manas is pure mentality and receives the pure impression of separate objects and from their sum receives the impression of the whole. It is Manas that measures, limits and divides.

The soul in Prana is pure vitality and pours itself out in various life energy.

The soul in Annam is pure matter and forgets force of consciousness in the form of consciousness.

Matter is the lowest rung of the ladder and the soul that has descended into Matter tends by its secret nature and inevitable self-impulsion to reemerge out of form towards the freedom of pure universal being. These are the two movements that govern world-existence, *adhogati*, the descent towards matter or mere form and *urdhwagati*, the ascent towards Spirit and God.

Man is a mental being, manu or manomaya purusha, who has entered into a vitalised material body and is seeking to make it capable of infinite mentality, infinite ideality so that it may become the perfect instrument, seat and temple of the manifest Sachchidananda.

THE UPANISHAD IN APHORISMS

Mind in the material world is attentive to two kinds of knowledge, impacts from outside, corporeal or mental, received into the individual mentality and translated into mental values and knowledge from within, spiritual, ideal or mental similarly translated.

Inert physical bodies receive all the impacts that the mind receives, but being devoid of organised mentality, retain them only in the involved mind in matter and are incapable of translating them into mental symbols.

Our bodies are naturally inert physical bodies moved by life and mind. They also receive all impacts, but not all of them are translated into mental values. Of those which are translated, some are rendered imperfectly, some perfectly, some immediately, some only after a longer or shorter incubation in the involved mind in matter. There are the same variable phenomena with the internal knowledge. All the knowledge translated here into mental values forms the stuff of our waking consciousness. This waking consciousness accepted by the *manomaya* Purusha as itself and organised round a central I-sense is the waking ego.

The jiva or embodied mental being is in its consciousness much wider than the waking ego; it has a wide range of knowledge and experience of the past, present and future, the near and the distant, this life and other lives, this world and other worlds which is not available to the waking ego. The waking ego fails to notice many things and forgets what it notices; the jiva notices and remembers all experiences.

That which goes on in our life-energy and bodies below the level of waking mind is our subconscious self in the world; that which goes on in our mind and higher principles above the level of our waking mind is our super-conscious self. The waking ego often receives intimations, more or less obscure, from either source which it fails to trace to their origin.

Man progresses in proportion as he widens his consciousness and renders ever wider and finer experiences available for the perception and delight of the waking consciousness and in proportion as he can ascend to higher reaches of mind and beyond mind to ideality and spirit.

The swiftest and most effective means of his advance and self-fulfilment is to dissolve his waking ego into the enjoyment of an infinite consciousness, at first mental of the universal *manomaya* Purusha, but afterwards ideal and spiritual of the high Vijnana and highest Sachchidananda.

The transcendence and dissolution of the waking mental ego in the body is therefore the first object of all practical Vedanta.

This transcendence and dissolution may result either in loss of the

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waking self and relapse into some sleep-bound principle, undifferentiated Prakriti, Sushupta Purusha, Sunyam Brahma (Nihil), etc. or in loss of the world self in Parabrahman or in universalisation of the waking self and the joy of God's divine being in and beyond the world, Amritam. The last is the goal proposed for man by the Isha Upanishad.

The waking ego, identifying the Jiva with its body, vital and mental experiences which are part of the stream of Nature's movement and subject to Nature and the process of the movement, falsely believes the soul to be the subject of Nature and not its lord, *amiśa* and not *iśa*. This is the illusion of bondage which the *manomaya* Purusha either accepts or seeks to destroy. Those who accept it are called *baddha* Jivas, souls in bondage; those who seek to destroy it, *mumukṣu* Jivas, self-liberating souls; those who have destroyed it are *mukta* Jivas, souls free from illusion and limitation.

In reality, no soul is bound and therefore none seeking liberation or liberated from bondage; these are all conditions of the waking mind and not of the self or spirit which is Isha, eternally lord and free.

The essence of bondage is limitation and the chief circumstances of limitation are death, suffering and ignorance.

Death, suffering and ignorance are circumstances of the mind in the vitalised body and do not touch the consciousness of the soul in vijñāna, ananda, chit and sat. The combination of the three lower members, mind, life and body, is called therefore *aparārdha*, the lower kingdom or in Christian parlance the kingdom of death and sin, the four higher members are called *parārdha*, the higher kingdom, or in Christian parlance, the kingdom of heaven. To liberate man from death, suffering and ignorance and impose the all-blissful and luminous nature of the higher kingdom upon the lower is the object of the Seer in the Isha Upanishad.

This liberation is to be effected by dissolving the waking ego into the Lord's divine being and experiencing entirely our unity with all other existences and with Him who is God, Atman and Brahman.

All individual existences are jagat in jāgati, object of motion in stream of motion and obey the laws and processes of that motion.

Body is an object of motion in the stream of material consciousness, of which the principal law is birth and death. All bodies are subject therefore to formation and dissolution.

Life is a current of motion in the stream of vital consciousness composed of eternal life-energy. Life is not itself subject to death,—death not

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- being a law of life-energy,—but only to expulsion from the form which it occupies and therefore to the physical experience of death of its body.

All matter here is filled with life-energy of a greater or less intensity of action, but the organisation of life in individual animation begins later in the process of the material world by the appearance first of the plant, then of the animal. This evolution of life is caused and supported by the pressure of the gods of the Bhuvār or Life-world upon Bhu.

Life entering into body is dominated partly by the laws of body; it is therefore unable to impart its own full and uninterrupted energy to its form. Consequently there is no physical immortality.

The organisation of individual animated life tends to hasten the period of dissolution by introducing shocks of an intensity of force alien to matter which wastes the material form by its activity. Therefore the plant dissolves while the stone and metal endure in their own equilibrium.

Mind entering into the vitalised body tends still farther to hasten the period of dissolution by the higher demands of its vibrations upon the body.

Mind is a knot of motion in the stream of mental consciousness. Like life, it is not itself subject to death, but only to expulsion from the vitalised body it has occupied. But because the mental ego identifies itself with the body and understands by its life only this residence in its present perishable gross corporeal body, therefore it has the mental experience of a bodily death.

The experience of death is therefore combined of the apparently mortal mind's ignorance of its own true immortal nature and of the limitation of energy in the body by which the form we inhabit wears out under the shocks of vibrating life-energy and vibrating mentality. We mean by death not dissolution of life or of mind, but dissolution of the form or body.

The dissolution of body is not true death for the mental being called man; it is only a change of media and of the surroundings of consciousness. Matter of body changes its constituents and groupings, mental being persists both in essence and personality and passes into other forms and environments.

SRI AUROBINDO

NOTES ON BERGSON

BERGSON—"philosophy of change",

"It symbolises the protest of the modern impatient man of action against the great Platonic tradition in philosophy of reason or intellect and static reality."

"It substitutes force for inertia, life for death and liberty for fatalism."
"Physics and logic are appropriate to the study of the inverse movement, matter, which is life or *elan vital* pulverised and its method is intellect and logic."

"Philosophy is the study of becoming in general and its method is intuition."

"Scrap the Platonic tradition and follow Plotinus 'Ask me not but understand in silence as I (Nature) am silent and am not wont to speak'."

"A philosophy of evolution itself evolving", "positive and empirical"

"moulded on experience, determined to base itself on solid grounds, a doctrine in no sense systematic, distinguishes different problems to examine them one by one...enemy of conventionality...antidote to the dogmatic finality of the traditional philosopher."

A short-cut through "the turning of the mind homeward, the coincidence of the human consciousness with the living principle"

"the destiny of man will be realised because it is the nature of the *elan vital* to triumph over matter and environment."

2

The office of intellect is not to fathom reality, but to fabricate and preside over action...intellect cannot comprehend life and reality. Intellect (logic) goes round the object, intuition enters into the object; one stops at the (absolute), the other enters into the absolute.

A philosophy of change? But what is change? In ordinary parlance change means passage from one condition to another and that would seem to imply

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passage from one status to another status. The shoot changes into a tree, passes from the status of shoot to the status of tree and there it stops; man passes from the status of young man to the status of old man and the only farther change possible to him is death or dissolution of his status. So it would seem that change is not something isolated which is the sole original and eternal reality, but it is something dependent on status, and if status were non-existent, change also could not exist. For we have to ask, when you speak of change as alone real, change of what, from what, to what? Without this "what" change could not be.

Change is evidently the change of some form or state of existence from one condition to another condition. Otherwise, what is it? To it itself fundamental and absolute, not explicable or definable by any other term than itself, perceivable and intelligible as the sole reality by a naked intuition which feels and cries out "Change, reality" and then falls dumb and can say no more?

An object changes, a person changes, a condition of things changes. But can it be said that the object is no real object but only a continuity of change, or that a person is not a person but a continuity of change, a condition of things is not a condition and there are no things but there is only a continuity of change? This seems to be an illustration of the besetting sin of metaphysics—to exalt a word into a reality or an idea into a reality without fathoming what is the reality which it tries to indicate. For to label with a word or a name is not to fathom and to define, to erect a concept is not to fathom. Fathom for us then what is change before you ask us to accept it as the only reality. You may say "I have fathomed it, I have seen it to be the one constant real, but do not ask me to define what it is; listen rather in silence to the silence of Nature and you too will fathom." But what if so listening, I fathom other realities than change—let us say, immutable being as well as mutable force, status as well as change? To prevent that you plunge into speech and not silence, into dialectics of the intellect instead of the undebatable certitudes of intuition, and so abandon your own methodology. If intuition alone is to be used, then you must give a place to my intuition as well as yours, and all, however contradictory in appearance, must stand until a greater intuition comes in to put all in their place, reconcile, include in a consistent whole.

In the world of our experience contradictories often complement and are necessary to each other's existence. Change is possible only if there is a status from which to change; but status again exists only as a step that

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pauses, a step in the continuous passage of change or a step on which change pauses before it passes into another step in its creative passage. And behind this relation is a duality of eternal status and eternal motion and behind this duality is something that is neither status nor change but contains both as its aspects—and That is likely to be the true Reality.

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Tangled is the way of works in the world. When Rama the Avatar murdered Vali or Krishna, who was God Himself, assassinated, to liberate his nation, his tyrant uncle Kamsa, who shall say whether they did good or did evil? But this we can feel that they acted divinely.

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THE DEVIL'S MASTIFF

(A STORY)

THERE had been a heavy fall throughout the whole of that December day. The roads were white and indistinguishable in a thick pall of moonlight and dazzling snow; here and there a drift betrayed the footing. In the sky a bright moon pursued by clouds ran timidly up the ascent of the firmament; great arms of darkness sometimes closed over it; sometimes it emerged and proceeded with its still luminous race, ran, swayed, floated, glided forward intently, unfalteringly. Patrick Curran, treading uncautiously the white uncertain flooring of earth, stumbling into snowdrifts, scouting into temporary darkness for his right road, cursed the weather and his fortunes.

"It is not enough" he complained, "that I should be a proscribed fugitive hiding my head in every uncertain refuge from the pursuit of this devil's Cromwell, doomed already to the gallows, owing my life every day to the trembling compassion of my poor father's tenants; it is not enough that I should have lost Alicia and that Luke Walter should have her; but the very moon and the snow and the night are his allies against me. Since God is so hard on me, I wonder why the devil does not come to my help—I would sell my soul to him this moment willingly. But perhaps he too is afraid of Cromwell."

"It is hardly probable," said a voice at his side suddenly.

Patrick Curran turned with a fierce start and clutched at his dagger. He was aware in the darkness of a dim form pacing beside him with a step much quieter and more assured than his own.

"Who are you?" he cried, rigid and menacing.

"A wayfarer like yourself," said the other, "I travel earth as a fugitive."

"From whom or what?" asked Patrick.

"How shall I say?" said the shadow, "Perhaps from my own thoughts, perhaps from a too powerful enemy."

After the discovery of the recent conspiracy to murder Cromwell and restore Charles Stuart, the country was full of Royalist fugitives, hiding by

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day, travelling by night, in the hope of reaching a port whence they could sail for Ostende or Calais. For the inquisitions of the Republican magistrates were imperative and indiscriminating.

"I would give", he said to himself, "my soul and the rest of my allotted days as a free gift to Satan, if I might once clasp Alicia in my arms and take with me into Hell the warm sense of the joy of her body and if I might see Luke Walter dead before me or be sure he was following me. Oh if I can once be sure of that, let the brown dog of the Dacres leap on me the next moment, I care not."

"You may be sure of it," answered the voice at his side, strangely sweet, yet to Patrick's ear formidable. He turned, thrilling.

"You must be the devil himself", he almost shouted.

"I may be only one who can read your thoughts", said the other in that sweet sinister voice which made the young man fancy sometimes that a woman spoke to him. "And that I can, you will easily judge when I have told you a very little of what I know of you. You are Patrick, the second son of Sir Gerald Curran who got his estate from his wife, Margaret Dacre, his baronetcy from King James and his death from Cromwell who took him prisoner at Worcester and hanged him. You were to have married Lady Alicia Nevil, when the conspiracy of which you were one of the heads as well as the hand destined to strike down the Puritan tyrant, was discovered by the discernment, luck and ruthless skill of Colonel Luke Walter."

The young Cavalier started and uttered a furious imprecation.

"It was he," said the other, "he has great brain-power and penetration and a resolute genius. It is even possible he may succeed Cromwell, if the God of the Puritans gives him a lease long enough."

"If I have the chance, I will shorten it," cried Patrick Curran.

"Or I," said the unknown, "for just now I too am a Royalist. But to proceed. You were proclaimed and doomed to a felon's death in your absence; the Earl, implicated in the conspiracy, was compelled as the price of his pardon to betroth his daughter to Luke Walter, and the marriage is fixed for tonight."

"Tonight!" groaned the young man, and he smote his thigh miserably with his hand.

"At the Church of Worndale."

"But will it matter if Luke Walter perishes before he has consummated his nuptials?"

"I promise you that," said the unknown. "It does not suit you that

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Alicia should marry another. It does not suit me that there should be a strong successor to Cromwell. Charles Stuart is my good friend, and I wish that he should rule England. Therefore, Patrick, it is a bargain."

"Who the devil are you?" cried the young man again, marvelling.

As if to answer the moon peeped out from between two heavy angry masses of black cloud, illumining the earth's intense and inclement whiteness. He saw beside him a young man of remarkable beauty, whose face was perfectly familiar, but his name could not be remembered.

"As for your soul and your life," said the stranger, and as their eyes met, Patrick shuddered, "you need not give them to the devil whether freely or as part of the bargain, for they are already his."

He laughed a laugh of terrible and ominous sweetness, and in a moment Patrick remembered. He knew that laugh, he knew that face. They were his own.

At that moment the moon passed away into the second fragment of cloud. Patrick stood, unable to speak, looking at the dim shadow in front of him. Then it vanished.

It was some time before the young man could command himself sufficiently to pursue his way. He tried to think for a moment that it was John Dacre, the illegitimate son of Sir Gerald by his sister-in-law Matilda Dacre, who resembled Patrick strongly and was his sworn comrade and lover. But he knew it was not John. That was not John's face or John's speech or John's thinking. It must have been a vivid dream or a waking illusion. He walked forward in the darkness, greatly disturbed, but with recovered courage.

Again the moon shone out, this time with a clear gulf of sky just in front of her. Before Patrick the white road stretched long, straight and visible to a great distance and was marked out here by a high snow-covered hedge from the equally white indistinguishable country around.

"Come now, that is better," said Patrick Curran. As he spoke, he saw far off on the road a dark object travelling towards him; he slackened his pace and was minded to turn off the road to avoid it. But it was approaching with phenomenal speed. As it came nearer, he saw that it was only a dog. Again Patrick stood still. A dog! There was nothing in that. It was not what he had feared. But he remembered that singular conversation and the impious prayer that had arisen in his heart about the brown Dog of the Dacres,—the dog which showed itself always when a Dacre was about to die and leaped on him whenever the doom was by violence. He smiled, but a little uncertainly. Then the moonlight seemed to dwell on

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the swiftly-travelling animal more intensely and he saw that it was brown.

Never had Patrick seen any earthly thing master of such a terrible speed. It ran, it galloped, it bounded, and the wretched man watching the terrific charge of that phantasmal monster,—for it was a gigantic mastiff,—felt his heart stop and his warm youthful blood congeal in his veins. It was now within twenty paces; he felt the huge eyes upon him and knew that it was going to leap. He went down heavily with the ponderous frame of the animal oppressing his breast, its leonine paws on his shoulders, its hot breathing moistening his face. And then there was nothing.

That was the most terrible part of it, to have been borne down physically by a semblance, an unearthly hallucination, a thing that was this moment and the next was not. Patrick struggled to his feet, overcome by a panic terror; his nerves cried to him to run, to travel away quickly from this accursed night and this road of ghastly encounters. But he felt as if hamstrung, helpless, clutched by an intangible destruction. He sat down on the snow, panted and waited.

After a few minutes the blood began to flow more quietly through his veins, the pounding of his heart slackened and the sick agitation of his nerves yielded to a sudden fiery inrush. He leaped furiously to his feet. "The Dog of the Dacres" he cried, "the brown Dog, the Devil's Mastiff! And no doubt it was his master (who) spoke to me in my own semblance. I am doomed, then. But not to the gallows. No, by God, not to the gallows. God's doom and the devil's, since I can resist neither, but not man's, not Cromwell's!" Then he paused. "Tonight!" he cried again. "At Worndale Church! But I will see her once before I go down to Hell. And it may be I shall take Luke Walter with me. It may be that is what the Devil wants of me."

He looked about the landscape and thought he could distinguish the trees that bordered the distant Church of Worndale. That was in front of him. Also in front, but much more to the left, was Trevesham Hall, the home of Alicia Nevil. He began walking rapidly, no longer with his first cautious and doubtful treading, but with a bold reckless stride. And it was noticeable that he no longer stumbled or floundered into snowdrifts. Patrick knew that he had only a few brief inches of his life's road left to his treading; for no man of the Dacre blood had ever lived more than twenty four hours after the Brown Dog leaped on him. A desperate courage had entered into his veins. He would see

(Incomplete)

SRI AUROBINDO

THE YOGA OF INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE*

CHAPTER II

THE STATUS OF KNOWLEDGE

THE Self, the Divine, the Supreme Reality, the All, the Transcendent,—the One in all these aspects is then the object of Yogic knowledge. Ordinary objects, the external appearances of life and matter, the psychology of our thoughts and actions, the perception of the forces of the apparent world can be part of this knowledge, but only in so far as it is part of the manifestation of the One. It becomes at once evident that the knowledge for which Yoga strives must be different from what men ordinarily understand by the word. For we mean ordinarily by knowledge an intellectual appreciation of the facts of life, mind and matter and the laws that govern them. This is a knowledge founded upon our sense-perception and upon reasoning from our sense-perceptions and it is undertaken partly for the pure satisfaction of the intellect, partly for practical efficiency and the added power which knowledge gives in managing our lives and the lives of others, in utilising for human ends the overt or secret forces of Nature and in helping or hurting, in saving and ennobling or in oppressing and destroying our fellow-men. Yoga, indeed, is commensurate with all life and can include all these subjects and objects. There is even a Yoga¹ which can be used for self-indulgence as well as for self-conquest, for hurting others as well as for their salvation. But "all life" includes not only, not even mainly life as humanity now leads it. It envisages rather and regards as its one true object a higher truly conscious existence which our half-conscious humanity does not yet possess and can only arrive at by a self-exceeding spiritual ascension. It is this greater con-

* *Synthesis of Yoga*, Chapter XIV (*Arya*, Vol. II). Revised by Sri Aurobindo.

¹ Yoga develops power, it develops it even when we do not desire or consciously aim at it; and power is always a double-edged weapon which can be used to hurt or destroy as well as to help and save. Be it also noted that all destruction is not evil.

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sciousness and higher existence which is the peculiar and appropriate object of Yogic discipline.

This greater consciousness, this higher existence are not an enlightened or illumined mentality supported by a greater dynamic energy or supporting a purer moral life and character. Their superiority to the ordinary human consciousness is not in degree but in kind and essence. There is a change not merely of the surface or instrumental manner of our being but of its very foundation and dynamic principle. Yogic knowledge seeks to enter into a secret consciousness beyond mind which is only occultly here, concealed at the bases of all existence. For it is that consciousness alone that truly knows and only by its possession can we possess God and rightly know the world and its real nature and secret forces. All this world visible or sensible to us and all too in it that is not visible is merely the phenomenal expression of something beyond the mind and the senses. The knowledge which the senses and intellectual reasoning from the data of the senses can bring us, is not true knowledge; it is a science of appearances. And even appearances cannot be properly known unless we know first the Reality of which they are images. This Reality is their self and there is one self of all; when that is seized, all other things can then be known in their truth and no longer as now only in their appearance.

It is evident that however much we may analyse the physical and sensible, we cannot by that means arrive at the Knowledge of the Self or of ourselves or of that which we call God. The telescope, the microscope, the scalpel, the retort and alembic cannot go beyond the physical, although they may arrive at subtler and subtler truths about the physical. If then we confine ourselves to what the senses and their physical aids reveal to us and refuse from the beginning to admit any other reality or any other means of knowledge, we are obliged to conclude that nothing is real except the physical and that there is no Self in us or in the universe, no God within and without, no ourselves even except this aggregate of brain, nerves and body. But this we are only obliged to conclude because we have assumed it firmly from the beginning and therefore cannot but circle round to our original assumption.

If, then, there is a Self, a Reality not obvious to the senses, it must be by other means than those of physical Science that it is to be sought and known. The intellect is not that means. Undoubtedly there are a number of supra-sensuous truths at which the intellect is able to arrive in its own manner and which it is able to perceive and state as intellectual conceptions. The very idea of Force for instance on which Science so much insists, is a conception,

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a truth at which the intellect alone can arrive by going beyond its data; for we do not sense this universal force but only its results, and the force itself we infer as a necessary cause of these results. So also the intellect by following a certain line of rigorous analysis can arrive at the intellectual conception and the intellectual conviction of the Self and this conviction can be very real, very luminous, very potent as the beginning of other and greater things. Still, in-itself intellectual analysis can only lead to an arrangement of clear conceptions, perhaps to a right arrangement of true conceptions; but this is not the knowledge aimed at by Yoga. For it is not in itself an effective knowledge. A man may be perfect in it and yet be precisely what he was before except in the mere fact of the greater intellectual illumination. The change of our being at which Yoga aims, may not at all take place.

It is true that intellectual deliberation and right discrimination are an important part of the Yoga of knowledge; but their object is rather to remove a difficulty than to arrive at the final and positive result of this path. Our ordinary intellectual notions are a stumbling-block in the way of knowledge; for they are governed by the error of the senses and they found themselves on the notion that matter and body are the reality, that life and force are the reality, that passion and emotion, thought and sense are the reality; and with these things we identify ourselves, and because we identify ourselves with these things we cannot get back to the real self. Therefore, it is necessary for the seeker of knowledge to remove this stumbling block and to get right notions about himself and the world; for how shall we pursue by knowledge the real self if we have no notion of what it is and are on the contrary burdened with ideas quite opposite to the truth? Therefore right thought is a necessary preliminary, and once the habit of right thought is established, free from sense-error and desire and old association and intellectual pre-judgment, the understanding becomes purified and offers no serious obstacle to the farther process of knowledge. Still, right thought only becomes effective when in the purified understanding it is followed by other operations, by vision, by experience, by realisation.

What are these operations? They are not mere psychological self-analysis and self-observation. Such analysis; such observation are, like the process of right thought, of immense value and practically indispensable. They may even, if rightly pursued, lead to a right thought of considerable power and effectivity. Like intellectual discrimination by the process of meditative thought they will have an effect of purification; they will lead to self-knowledge of a certain kind and to the setting right of the disorders of the soul

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and the heart and even of the disorders of the understanding. Self-knowledge of all kinds is on the straight path to the knowledge of the real Self. The Upanishad tells us that the Self-existent has so set the doors of the soul that they turn outwards and most men look outward into the appearances of things; only the rare soul that is ripe for a calm thought and steady wisdom turns its eye inward, sees the Self and attains to immortality. To this turning of the eye inward psychological self-observation and analysis is a great and effective introduction. We can look into the inward of ourselves more easily than we can look into the inward of things external to us because there, in things outside us, we are in the first place embarrassed by the form and secondly we have no natural previous experience of that in them which is other than their physical substance. A purified or tranquillised mind may reflect or a powerful concentration may discover God in the world, the Self in Nature even before it is realised in ourselves, but this is rare and difficult.¹ And it is only in ourselves that we can observe and know the process of the Self in its becoming and follow the process by which it draws back into self-being. Therefore the ancient counsel, know thyself, will always stand as the first word that directs us towards *the* knowledge. Still, psychological self-knowledge is only the experience of the modes of the Self, it is not the realisation of the Self in its pure being.

The status of knowledge, then, which Yoga envisages is not merely an intellectual conception or clear discrimination of the truth, nor is it an enlightened psychological experience of the modes of our being. It is a "realisation," in the full sense of the word; it is the making real to ourselves and in ourselves of the Self, the transcendent and universal Divine, and it is the subsequent impossibility of viewing the modes of being except in the light of that Self and in their true aspect as its flux of becoming under the psychological and physical conditions of our world-existence. This realisation consists of three successive movements, internal vision, complete internal experience and identity.

This internal vision, *dr̥ṣṭi*, the power so highly valued by the ancient sages, the power which made a man a Rishi or Kavi and no longer a mere thinker, is a sort of light in the soul by which things unseen become as evident and real to it—to the soul and not merely to the intellect—as do

¹ In one respect, however, it is easier, because in external things we are not so much hampered by the sense of the limited ego as in ourselves; one obstacle to the realisation of God is therefore removed.

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- things seen to the physical eye. In the physical world there are always two forms of knowledge, the direct and the indirect, *pratyakṣa*, of that which is present to the eyes, and *parokṣa*, of that which is remote from and beyond our vision. When the object is beyond our vision, we are necessarily obliged to arrive at an idea of it by inference, imagination, analogy, by hearing the descriptions of others who have seen it or by studying pictorial or other representations of it if these are available. By putting together all these aids we can indeed arrive at a more or less adequate idea or suggestive image of the object, but we do not realise the thing itself; it is not yet to us the grasped reality, but only our conceptual representation of a reality. But once we have seen it with the eyes,—for no other sense is adequate,—we possess, we realise; it is there secure in our satisfied being, part of ourselves in knowledge. Precisely the same rule holds good of psychical things and of the Self. We may hear clear and luminous teachings about the Self from philosophers or teachers or from ancient writings; we may by thought, inference, imagination, analogy or by any other available means attempt to form a mental figure or conception of it; we may hold firmly that conception in our mind and fix it by an entire and exclusive concentration;¹ but we have not yet realised it, we have not seen God. It is only when after long and persistent concentration or by other means the veil of the mind is rent or swept aside, only when a flood of light breaks over the awakened mentality, *jyotirmaya Brahman*, and conception gives place to a knowledge-vision in which the Self is as present, real, concrete as a physical object to the physical eye, that we possess in knowledge; for we have seen. After that revelation, whatever fadings of the light, whatever periods of darkness may afflict the soul, it can never irretrievably lose what it has once held. The experience is inevitably renewed and must become more frequent till it is constant; when and how soon depends on the devotion and persistence with which we insist on the path and besiege by our will or our love the hidden Deity.

This inner vision is one form of psychological experience; but the inner experience is not confined to that seeing; vision only opens, it does not embrace. Just as the eye, though it is alone adequate to bring the first sense of realisation, has to call in the aid of experience by the touch and other organs of sense before there is an embracing knowledge, so the vision

¹ This is the idea of the triple operation of Jñānayoga, *śravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyāsana*, hearing, thinking or mentalising and fixing in concentration.

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of the self ought to be completed by an experience of it in all our members. Our whole being ought to demand God and not only our illumined eye of knowledge. For since each principle in us is only a manifestation of the Self, each can get back to its reality and have the experience of it. We can have a mental experience of the Self and seize as concrete realities all those apparently abstract things that to the mind constitute existence—consciousness, force, delight and their manifold forms and workings: thus the mind is satisfied of God. We can have an emotional experience of the Self through Love and through emotional delight, love and delight of the Self in us, of the Self in the universal and of the Self in all with whom we have relations: thus the heart is satisfied of God. We can have an aesthetic experience of the Self in beauty, a delight-perception and taste of the absolute reality all-beautiful in everything whether created by ourselves or Nature in its appeal to the aesthetic mind and the senses; thus the sense is satisfied of God. We can have even the vital, nervous experience and practically the physical sense of the Self in all life and formation and in all workings of powers, forces, energies that operate through us or others or in the world: thus the life and the body are satisfied of God.

All this knowledge and experience are primary means of arriving at and of possessing identity. It is our self that we see and experience and therefore vision and experience are incomplete unless they culminate in identity, unless we are able to live in all our being the supreme Vedantic knowledge, He am I. We must not only see God and embrace Him, but become that Reality. We must become one with the Self in its transcendence of all form and manifestation by the resolution, the sublimation, the escape from itself of ego and all its belongings into That from which they proceed, as well as become the Self in all its manifested existences and becomings, one with it in the infinite existence, consciousness, peace, delight by which it reveals itself in us and one with it in the action, formation, play of self-conception with which it garbs itself in the world.

It is difficult for the modern mind to understand how we can do more than conceive intellectually of the Self or of God; but it may borrow some shadow of this vision, experience and becoming from that inner awakening to Nature which a great English poet has made a reality to the European imagination. If we read the poems in which Wordsworth expressed his realisation of Nature, we may acquire some distant idea of what realisation is. For, first, we see that he had the vision of something in the world which is the very Self of all things that it contains, a conscious force and presence

THE YOGA OF INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE

- other than its forms, yet cause of its forms and manifested in them. We perceive that he had not only the vision of this and the joy and peace and universality which its presence brings, but the very sense of it, mental, aesthetic, vital, physical; not only this sense and vision of it in its own being but in the nearest flower and simplest man and the immobile rock; and, finally, that he even occasionally attained to that unity, that becoming the object of his dedication, one phase of which is powerfully and profoundly expressed in the poem "A slumber did my spirit seal," where he describes himself as become one in his being with earth, "rolled round in its diurnal course with stocks and stones and trees." Exalt this realisation to a profounder Self than physical Nature and we have the elements of the Yogic knowledge. But all this experience is only the vestibule to that suprasensuous, supramental realisation of the Transcendent who is beyond all His aspects, and the final summit of knowledge can only be attained by entering into the superconscient and there merging all other experience into a supernal unity with the Ineffable. That is the culmination of all divine knowing; that also is the source of all divine delight and divine living.

That status of knowledge is then the aim of this path and indeed of all paths when pursued to their end, to which intellectual discrimination and conception and all concentration and psychological self-knowledge and all seeking by the heart through love and by the senses through beauty and by the will through power and works and by the soul through peace and joy are only keys, avenues, first approaches and beginnings of the ascent which we have to use and to follow till the wide and infinite levels are attained and the divine doors swing open into the infinite Light.

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THE NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

THE new-year messages, for those who know the source from which they come and study their significance and relation to the changing conditions of human life, have always been of the greatest importance. During the last war they were virtual prophecies of the essential trends of world affairs and gave a definite direction to the spiritual aspiration and discipline of those who seek the Divine and His reign upon earth. When all was dark and the forces of disorder and disintegration ran riot in human society, they pointed a finger of light towards the horizons that were blushing with the coming dawn, and breathed not only hope and faith, but courage and certitude into many a drooping heart. They always suggest the right attitude one should take in regard to the happenings of the world and the right perspective in which one should view them, and impart a spiritual force not only to sustain but also to lead us through the tides of the times.

Before trying to understand what the message of this new year means to convey, let us for a brief moment cast a glance at the message of the last year:

Lord, Thou hast told us:

Do not give way, hold tight.

It is when everything seems
lost that all is saved."

The Divine inculcated an utmost constancy of faith and teracity in that crucial hour of the life of humanity, and a promise of safety was held out as a gleam of light beyond the darkness of the tunnel through which man was passing.

This year's message is couched in an altogether different key and suggests a different context and climate of applicability. It runs:

My Lord, here is Thy advice to all, for this year:

"Never boast about anything,
Let your acts speak for you".

THE NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

The message implies an era of "acts", of achievements, of conquests for the Divine. But that the "acts" may not be frustrated or stultified, it is essential that there should be no vaunting, no egoistic self-glorification either at their beginning or at the end. The very injunction not to vaunt presupposes occasions and objects of vaunting. The message suggests that there will be occasions, probably abundant occasions, for vaunting; there may be solid achievements of far-reaching consequences, signal successes in the war of Light against the forces of darkness; but the soldiers of the Light must not forget, like the gods in the Kena Upanishad, to offer the glory of the victory to the Divine, and feel grateful for it. Their devotion to the Divine should be reflected in their acts and not blazoned in their vaunts.

Vaunts are extremely harmful for two reasons: First, they seriously impede the Divine's work by feeding the separative ego of the worker. The essential condition of divine work being a state of consciousness purged of all taint of the ego and totally surrendered to the divine Force, nothing can be more harmful than vaunts, for they are a self-assertion of the ego and a cause of its greater alienation from the Divine. When one vaunts, it is only as a little, limited, ignorant individual that one does so. A finite individual, vaunting of his finite and fleeting achievements—however glamorous they may be in the eyes of the world—betrays his blindness to the Infinite to whom he owes them as well as his own being and becoming. And how can one who is blind to the truth of his own being become a servant of the Divine and a soldier of His Light? Vaunts are the progeny of a petty consciousness and a prolific source of obscurity and incapacity.

The second reason is occult, and none the less important. According to occult knowledge perfect secrecy should be observed about one's important undertakings till they are accomplished. To speak about them is to give them a material expression, which serves as a handle for the forces of darkness to invest and thwart them.¹ These forces abound in the world atmosphere, and are bent upon defeating all our upward endeavours or falsify their results. They are conscious forces, beings of the lower vital or subtle physical type, that revel in our failures and disappointments, and stubbornly

¹ These discussions usually bring on the sadhak a stress of the opposing atmosphere and cannot be helpful to his progress. Reserve is the best attitude...

Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother.

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oppose all movements that tend to ameliorate human conditions. So long as our plans and projects move on the mental plane and are not expressed in words, these beings cannot get at them; it is only when they are expressed in words that they pounce upon them and strive to frustrate them by putting obstacles in their way or creating adverse circumstances.

If a mere verbal expression is fraught with such dangers, it goes without saying that a vaunt or boast is a blatant challenge and provocation to these forces, besides entailing, as we have said, a magnification of the ego and an obscuration of consciousness. All high endeavours must be undertaken in silence and humility of spirit, as an offering to the Divine; and when they are accomplished, their results too must be offered to Him; for, it is His Force alone that makes all accomplishments possible.

The message is addressed to all who seek and follow the Mother's guidance in their lives. It has at once an individual and a collective appeal; but the collective appeal carries in it a subtle and considerable significance. It does not take an exceptional development of the yogic consciousness to detect and reject a movement of egoistic pride or vanity when it rises in us in connection with our personal achievements, but when we vaunt about a collective body or an institution to which we belong, the vaunt seems not only justifiable but even laudable and desirable. Our individual ego feels a comfortable sense of exaltation and glory in identifying itself with the collective ego, hardly suspecting that, except for the wider orbit in which it then finds itself, it remains essentially the same—unaltered in its blindness and closed to the Infinite. All egoism must be discarded, individual and collective, if the Divine's work has to be properly accomplished. Like individual humility, there should be also a sincere collective humility before the Divine, so that unhampered by human limitations, His Force may work freely for the fulfilment of His Will in the world. Absolute loyalty there must be to the institution to which one belongs, and an unreserved self-consecration to the ideal it represents; but no vaunt or vainglory, no arrogation to oneself or to one's group of the credit of its achievements; for, all credit should go to the supreme Mother who presides over and guides the institution, which is but a developing centre of Her universal work. When all actions are done in this unegoistic, unbragging way, they become occasions and mirrors of our inner growth, reflectors of our brightening consciousness—they "speak" for us, with the radiant eloquence of Truth which no boasting or bragging can ever imitate.

Behind the plain surface of the message, one feels a vibrating dynamo of

THE NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

force and a pledge and prophecy of a period of growth and expansion and achievements. The Divine has a surer grip on Matter today than ever before, and Matter has a greater saturation of His Light. Not that all resistance has ceased, but it is certainly giving way under the increasing pressure of the descending Force. The aspiration for Light is becoming more and more intense and articulate in the heart of man, and a longing for unity and harmony seems to infect even his selfish interests. It would, indeed, be cynical to shut one's eyes to the glints of light that are filtering through the gloom of the present. These glints are the heralds of the glory of the future. Let there be no vaunts, individual and collective, darkening and lowering the consciousness of the workers of the Divine, and tempting the undivine forces to confound their lofty purpose in the era that the new year's message inaugurates; for, the hour of victory approaches, and the Mother's voice rings, clear and commanding, above the tumult of the present crisis:

“Leaving the past far behind us, let us march towards a luminous future.”

RISHABHCHAND

Imitation is sometimes a good training-ship; but it will never fly the flag of the admiral.

Rather hang thyself than belong to the horde of successful imitators.

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IT is a great privilege for me to have been invited to meet all of you in this place which is not only a place of worship but also a place for the translation of that worship into concrete acts of love and friendship and brotherhood. I recall the occasion about 4 or 5 years ago when my friends in Bombay who are running the Sri Aurobindo Centre there, invited me to speak to them. I have been a very humble student of Sri Aurobindo since long but I should say that I have never had the ambition of speaking or of interpreting or of saying or advising on matters which have flowed from him and have irrigated the land of India and, I should say, all spiritual minds throughout the world. But it happened that my friends called me on that occasion to speak something about Sri Aurobindo. This is the next occasion when I am appearing in the midst of friends who have been devoted to Sri Aurobindo and to all that he has preached and lived for and is living still in our midst. I do not believe that such souls can pass away out of our ken. It might be that our physical or intellectual eyes cannot see him but if we go deeper, I think, it is such great Souls that inhabit the higher atmosphere and it is their inspiration and light which give us what little light we have in our hearts and which guides us from time to time.

It is really a very great crisis, if I may say so, in which all of us are living. On one side is the call of action, the call of external life, the call of almost unceasing activity, the call of the body, the call of the mind, the call of the elemental urges of human nature. On the other, is the call which may be said to be an inner call,—the call of that central Power—a centre of Power rather—from which emanate all other things and which permeates and suffuses everything that is in existence. If I may say so, one is a movement from the periphery to the centre and the other is a movement from the centre to the periphery. There is no doubt that whether we try to move from the periphery to the centre or from the centre to the periphery, the object,—the aim,—of all of us seems to be the betterment of life and the betterment not only of individuals but of the whole of the society or of human kind.

* Speech delivered at Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir on 27-12-1953

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It is one thing to have a very great aim, and it is another to have the proper and right means to achieve that aim. If one starts from the periphery to the centre and if another starts from the centre to the periphery, it makes all the difference in the methodology of the science of human progress.

There is another conflict which is confronting us and that is as regards the attitude that we adopt towards existence, towards life, towards its problems and towards humanity. One attitude is that which looks upon the whole of existence as a material, mechanical existence in which the soul or spirit about which we speak is looked upon as the result of certain combinations of material forces. There is the other attitude which we call spiritual and which is in conflict with this material attitude and which says that all that exists emanates, derives its life, strength and power, and draws its very existence from the Spirit and nothing exists but the Spirit since matter itself is but a form of the Spirit. These are the two attitudes that people adopt, and thinkers in the modern world try to deduce from this attitude the principles of action, principles of thought, systems of philosophy and metaphysics. I think, of the two, the greater conflict is this one.

In India, it has been our tradition to have a number of systems of thought and philosophy. People have never been satisfied with a single approach to the Truth. If we have had the greatest spiritual geniuses, we have had also Charvakas who said, as in the Gita:

अपरस्परसंभूतं किमन्यत्कामहेतुकम्

What else but satisfaction of desires, is the purpose of all this? They say, there is no essential co-ordination between these forces. As between these two schools of thought, there are numerous systems of thought, such as Adwaitavad, Vishishtadwaitavad, and so on. I need not enumerate them here. I am sometimes very much pained when Dwaitavad, Adwaitavad and other systems which are essentially spiritualistic in outlook fight among themselves to such an extent, that they try to eliminate each other and look upon each other, as if one is the born enemy of the other. I think at such times, we entirely forget that there is another school of thought which is absolutely contradictory and prejudicial to the very existence of the idea of spirituality. It is that school which has to be fought rather than any other system or school of thought which essentially believes in the existence of the Spirit.

The materialistic school believes in what it sees, it feels, what it experiences through the Microscope, the Telescope, the Test-tube and such other things;

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they believe that this is the be-all and the end-all and therefore their approach is naturally from the periphery to the centre, whereas, as I said, the other school believes that it is from the centre that everything emanates and therefore their attempt is to try to solve the problems of this world by trying to start from the centre towards the periphery. When this conflict is on, we, born in India and with a very rich heritage in the line of spirituality, naturally must try to see and understand what heritage we have brought. It is very easy now-a-days to pick up 'isms' here and there and feel satisfied that we have understood a particular school of thought,—that it is the best and that we ought to follow it and that it is the panacea for all the evils in the world. Because today the 'isms' are very active and have the mission and ambition of covering the whole world. By propagating the principles they hold strongly, they try to permeate the whole world with these ideas. Almost everyday, in and out, as we open books, newspapers, etc. we find that kind of propaganda being carried on. I read an American book recently, entitled "Immature Minds", and there the writer has very vividly described as to how the modern educated mind is being worked upon and influenced right from the rising of the sun to its setting, by innumerable influences which are being poured through newspapers, through cheap literature, through the Radio, through the Television and numerous other means of communication. He has drawn the conclusion that this results in what is called "immature minds". A man may be grown-up, he may have grey hair on his head, he may have read numerous books: may be a close reader of the daily newspaper including the advertisements,—but then, the author of the books says, what is the result?—The result is an 'immature mind', because he is all the time open to varied influences and the result is that he is not able to think for himself. If you ask him anything he will speak with you at a level—very high level possibly—but that level is the level of 'Imitation', of ready objective absorption but nothing beyond that, nothing living in it, nothing that shakes his mind to its roots, nothing that brings out his inner thought. Therefore I say it is very easy to believe in these 'isms' and start work and, therefore, it is all the more necessary for those who think, believe, and feel that they have a soul to lose or a soul to gain—it is for them absolutely necessary that they should try to be as deep and as profound as possible. At the same time we should see as to what it is that we have brought with us all along these 3 to 5 thousand years. Whether you call it hereditary or environmental, it is there in the atmosphere in which the Indian people live.

You will have observed that all the modern leaders of thought and action

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in India during the last two hundred years or so,—however profoundly they might have been impressed by the West, however deeply they might have studied Western thought,—when they began work in India and thought of speaking to the masses, thought of speaking to the common Indian, they had to fall back upon this rich heritage, this trend towards spirituality—this love of sacrifice, of service, of the inner Truth, and everyone of them,—right from Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a long series of big people that we have had, had to line up. Whatever the influence on their minds of Western thought, they had ultimately to come to the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita or whatever other book it might be. And that has happened to Sri Aurobindo in the highest degree. He was kept away by his parent—his father—from everything that was Indian—Indian culture, spirituality, Indian influence, and Indian ways of life even,—and yet when he stepped on the shores of India, almost uninvited a rush of spirituality or a spiritual calm descended upon his mind. The description that he has given of it, is well known to everybody who has read about his life. And, thence possibly began his real and earnest search, and you know the result. Fortunately he was not like Sri Ramkrishna Paramahansadev who did not know anything of the West,—he had not been influenced in any way by the West or by her thought or culture or her ways of life. Sri Aurobindo was fully suffused with Western thought, its civilisation, its methods and ways of life, and yet was so utterly taken up with spirituality that he could later synthesise both and give us a picture of the future as to what may come and would come by a real living synthesis of both these trends of thought.

I was speaking about two movements, one of matter, the other of the spirit, and I was also speaking as to how these movements, though seemingly contradictory, can be synthesised and, I think, Sri Aurobindo is the very embodiment of the synthesis of these two powerful forces seemingly cancelling each other, seemingly in a death-grip with each other. Sri Aurobindo was not merely a teacher of the synthesis of Yoga, he was also the teacher of the synthesis of these two mighty forces, and therefore he proclaims that Matter itself is Spirit and he also says that it is by realising these two nodes of existence as it were, that we can arrive at the real Truth. It is only then that we can understand his emphasis on the idea of Purushottama, for all these contradictory forces find their synthesis in the Purushottama. I think, since we are at a crisis—individuals, groups, nations as well as the whole humanity may be said to be in a crisis—in this critical juncture, it is the great responsibility of India, to rise to the occasion as she has this rich

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heritage of the past, and also because these seers have called us afresh not merely to what has been said in the past but to something which is said in the present and in connection with the future. We need not think that all that has been said, has been said once for all and nothing new is going to be said.

Many people sometimes ask me as to what is new in Sri Aurobindo; it is the old Adwaita Vedanta and does not seem to be much more than that, they say. I have been trying to understand the urge that carried Sri Aurobindo to the highest stand from which he spoke. I think, if all his books are totally forgotten and if the one single urge to reach the summit of consciousness that inspired him inspires us all, that would be the greatest possible service that could be done by a Seer to humanity. Much more so, of course, if we read and study in that perspective what he has given to us—much more so also, if we formulate our minds and our course of action inspired by his works. We have enough of what we have got from the past but we cannot go on looking backward all the time because that shows poverty—both of creativeness and of vision as regards the future. We must be inspired by the vision of the future and at the same time, we must be inspired by the confidence that we are here and now led by Seers like Sri Aurobindo who are capable of creating a new spiritual outlook that is necessary not only for the present but also for the future.

We oftentimes say that India is spiritual but the Westerners who come here laugh at us and say: 'That is your spirituality—millions and millions are dying of hunger, millions and millions are steeped in ignorance, millions are going without any medical help, millions are there with pale faces, with little nourishment—and you speak of the Gita and spirituality.' They laugh at us and, I think, that in that laugh is the challenge of materiality to spirituality. They say—'You may be spiritual people! Well, we shall take you to the small nation of Denmark and you will see that, without spirituality, the people there are brilliant, young, buoyant, fresh, doing so much of social service, doing things on a very big scale for the service of the people,' and so on and so forth. I do not think that we can survive with our spirituality unless we take up that challenge, and that challenge can be taken up not by bifurcating and divorcing spirituality from materiality but by synthesising both and looking at them as two nodes of the Supreme and by infusing spirituality into materiality to such an extent that materialists will have to look up and say: 'We have been all along believing in materialism and we were absorbed in something like *Avidya*, let us shake

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hands with each other,—with *Avidya* let us conquer the world and with *Vidya* let us conquer the Spirit.' I think it is along that line that our action, our thought and our future progress should lie. If we are to learn anything from Sri Aurobindo, it is this important truth, which may be said to be the Truth of the system of philosophy that we ought to follow. He has fortunately written so much, with such vigour, and on so many subjects that we can dip anywhere and find gems enough to satisfy our modern needs.

Some would say, 'No doubt Sri Aurobindo and some others had reached great heights but we, common people, despair about the heights that they have reached,—we are busy with day-to-day life, with our struggle for existence, with children and wife and so many other dependants to feed, with hard conditions of life,—what can we do? It is better to follow materiality and get all our needs fulfilled rather than follow spirituality leading to a bleak desert? There, precisely, I should assert that it is not leading to a bleak desert. If rightly followed, it has the power and the strength to irrigate all deserts and turn them into beautiful gardens. But we must understand spirituality in its integrality. Unfortunately, spirituality oftentimes is understood not in its integrality or totality but only in a partial aspect of it. If, at all, there is any Super-Spirit which is responsible for all that exists, I believe that it is not negligent of what is going on, it is supremely alert and carries this chariot of evolution according to its laws from step to step. Might be, this world-order may not satisfy us who oftentimes wishfully think that this should be or should not be so and so. If everyone of us tries to judge the world from his own point of view then, I think, we are trying to impose our own individual intellectual interpretation on the order of existence which is conceived as a whole. It is not an order which can be judged thus by bits. I think we ought to look at the totality of existence and take an integral view of spirituality. I think if we view and follow spirituality in this way, we shall certainly be able to achieve what is implied in the whole teaching of spirituality. I think that there is today very great need of spirituality. We must make up our minds to earnestly follow the spiritual path. Ultimately, it is the Spirit which is the very home of all force and the source of power.

You will remember that when Buddha was disappointed with all the other methods of austerity, of Tapasya, he went over to one Alarkalam who gave him the lesson of Rajayoga and the method of training his mind so that he may be full of *Maitree*, *Karuna* and *Kalyana*; and it was by going that way that he achieved Sambodhi. As a result, his whole future life changed

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and he gave to the world the gospel of "Be good and do good". But the method of Sadhana was the method of inner seeking.

If I may say so, the method of approaching human problems only from outside, only from the material point of view, is like the approach from the periphery, from the circumference. It is like the symptomatic, curative treatment of our medical brotherhood. If there is some fever, some rise in temperature, they immediately try to bring it down, by the medicines they administer. It is symptomatic, curative treatment. It is neither preventive nor that which goes to the root-cause of the malady. I think all methods, all remedies to destroy evil in this world from the material standpoint, are like this. I never for a moment doubt that like others the materialists too have as their aim the betterment of humanity. But their methodology and approach differs, because it is merely symptomatic and curative and not from the point of view of rooting out the cause of the trouble. What is needed today is prevention of the disease, making humanity immune from these troubles and problems. Social service has its use no doubt, we must consider that, and we must engage ourselves in social service, but what is the result? There will have to be always an army of social servants in every age and in every country, and to the end of time there will be social problems and millions born to go through the same miseries, the same ignorance. There will always be an ailing society and a number of doctors to administer medicines. But what should be our aim, if we think more rationally? We should aim at having a healthy society with healthy human beings who are born fresh with minds, feelings, bodies brilliant and radiant with health. If that is what we aim at, then, I think we have to go to the root of the matter, not merely with the aim of curing but with the higher aim of prevention. No doubt, there are hundreds of remedies today, but at the same time what is happening?—new diseases are coming up. More psychiatrists are in evidence and more mental hospitals are being built. A number of different devices are being found to see that all these new diseases also are cured. This is not, however, a fundamental cure nor a prevention. Things recur and go on recurring. So, I think, here again Sri Aurobindo is very original—he asks us to go to the root of the matter.

Though the materialist sometimes make fun of spirituality and the Spirit, they too are trying to go to the root. But that is from outside, from the periphery. If you read something about the biological experiments, you find that scientists have come to the conclusion that wherever evolutionary changes are taking place, they are doing so in the gene, in the seed and not

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in the body. No doubt, social services and other things ought to be there so long as there are social evils and we must fight them. But we should not ignore research as regards going to the root of the matter. That can be done only by striving that far better human beings are born with physical, mental and moral health. But, then, that too is not enough. After all, what is the body? Even in the West, very great medical authorities are coming to the psycho-somatic theory that mind and body are one entity, they act and react on each other. Spirituality declares that, man is not the body alone, man is not the mind alone, man is not the power of feeling alone, man is a composite of all these; but all these emanate from Spirit which cannot be put into a Test-tube. May be, time may come when the manifestation of the Spirit, the movement of the Spirit may be capable of being demonstrated on the material level. But, then, today we have to be guided by seeing actually great souls, and what they do through intuition, and by the power of the higher consciousness. Here Sri Aurobindo has pointed out to us that a higher race, a greater new race is in the making. There can be absolutely no doubt about it. If somebody had said when man was not yet born on this planet and evolution had come up only to the ape, that the ape was not the last of creation and that another animal was in the making—a human being with mind, with greater powers, with far more delicate nervous system, with a brain, that would be able to weave mighty systems of thought, manufacture fine instruments, devise new methods of using the forces of Nature, it would have been looked upon as a fantastic dream. But all that is now a fact after a few million years.

I think, when we are absorbed by what exists today and our eyes do not see what is beyond, we are prone to say that what we have today and what exists would exist forever without change. The mind is after all in the midst of the present current. It sees the present and misses the flow which is eternal. We are somewhere in the stream. We cannot say that the stream ends here and nothing more is going to happen. The stream is flowing with the original creativeness in it and there is a call of the future. Since this current is flowing along, a time must come when better men, better in essence, must be born. Men like Sri Aurobindo had far better and greater insight into these matters. Possibly he could physically and not merely mentally feel the flow of evolution. I think, he has seen far ahead and harkened to us as to what is going to happen, and that we must play our part. If we do not play our part, then it would be like standing on the banks of the Ganges and not taking advantage of a nice bath. The Ganges will never invite us to have a dip in it, it is for us

The Human Cycle

(AN ABRIDGEMENT)

CHAPTER I

THE CYCLE OF SOCIETY

FOLLOWING the spirit of modern science and its obsession of the sole reality of Matter, in our history and sociology there is an emphasis on economic factors to the neglect of psychological elements. Recently, the supremacy of this attitude has been questioned, and a deeper view of things is on the way. Lamprecht, a German thinker, has presented a first suggestive psychological theory of history. There are, according to him, four stages or cycles—symbolic, tygal and conventional, individualistic, and subjective—through which a nation or civilisation has to move. It will be worth while to follow up his suggestions in the light of Eastern thought and experience.

Indeed, in all early societies we find a strong symbolic mentality that governs it. The little-understood Vedic Age, for instance, its rituals of sacrifice and marriage, the relation between men and women, its fourfold order. From this we pass on to the tygal order with its increasing fixity of type, and as this moves towards the conventional stage the external supports, a system of rigid grades and hierarchies grows more important till in the end the whole thing turns into a sham. Then arrive men of intellectual power and we have the Age of Reason, Revolt, Progress, Freedom. Limited in aim and method, it is yet a necessary passage to the subjective period of humanity with its potentialities of a deeper self-discovery.

CHAPTER II

THE AGE OF INDIVIDUALISM AND REASON

The failure of the conventional and the petrified tygal figure brings in the individualistic age of human society. Utilitarian and rationalistic, it

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is of European origin, the East has entered into it only by contact and influence. In its beginning a revolt of reason, it has ended, inevitably, with physical Science. Speculative and scientific reason for their means, the pursuit of a practicable social justice and some utility for their spirit, the progressive nations of Europe set out on their search for this light and this law. They found and held it with enthusiasm in the discoveries of physical Science. It has been the fulfilment and triumph of the individualistic age of human society, it has seemed also likely to be its end. For this discovery by individual free-thought of universal laws of which the individual is almost a by-product and by which he must necessarily be governed, the attempt actually to govern the social life of humanity in conscious accordance with the mechanism of these laws—such as a rigid economic or governmental Socialism—seems to lead logically to the suppression of that very individual freedom which made the discovery and the attempt at all possible. But this may not be, for already rationalistic and physical Science has overpassed itself and newer psychological and psychic knowledge is likely. Secondly, the triumphant West has awakened the slumbering East. If the East follows its own bent and evolves a new social tendency and culture, this is bound to have an enormous influence on the direction of world's civilisation.

But individualistic Europe has found out two important idea-forces in this respect: the democratic conception of the right of all individuals as members of the society to full life and the deeper truth that the individual is not merely a social unit but something in himself, a soul, a being,—an idea that agrees at its roots with the profoundest spiritual conception of Asia and has a large part to play in the moulding of the future.

CHAPTER III

THE COMING OF THE SUBJECTIVE AGE

To return to the original ideas themselves for the light would be, one might think, the shortest way for an individualistic age of mankind. But this is not possible, for such return is likely to be a reaction and in any case would not serve the need of a developing humanity in which, if the old is at all taken up, it must be transformed and exceeded. It is this prin-

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ciple that justifies an age of individualism and rationalism. In India since the great Buddhistic upheaval there has been a series of such attempts, but insufficiently militant and destructive. It is only with the period of European influences and impact that a radical and effective revaluation of ideas has come into existence.

The individualistic age, proceeding by individual mind and reason, however, must go from the individual to the universal. In Europe in modern times that has taken the form of physical Science. But after a time it must become apparent that this is not the whole knowledge; that man is a mental as well as a physical and vital being. Therefore to find the truth of things and the law of his relation to that truth he must go deeper and fathom the subjective secret of himself and things. This he may attempt to do for a time by the power of critical and analytical reason, but not for long. For in his study of himself he cannot but come face to face with the soul in himself and the soul in the world and find it to be an entity so profound, so complex and so full of hidden secrets and powers that his intellectual reason betrays itself as an insufficient light and fumbling seeker.

All these tendencies are manifest in the world to-day. The art, music, and literature of the world have also undergone a profound revolution in the direction of an ever-increasing subjectivism, from the vital to a mental, intuitionist and psychic, pointing the direction in which the human mind is being piloted on a momentous voyage of discovery. This can be seen also in the new ideas about education and upbringing of the child.

The nascent subjectivism shows itself not so much in the relation of individuals or in the dominant ideas and tendencies of social development but in the collective self-consciousness of man in the nation. It is here that we shall see most clearly what is its actual drift and the goal towards which the social cycle, entering this phase, is intended to arrive in its wide revolution.

(To continue)

SISIR KUMAR GHOSH

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(1) **Natural Selection of Political Forces** by *Adolf A. Berle, Jr.*, University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, Kansas, U.S.A. 1950 pp. 103 \$ 2.00.

"Nothing is more obscure to humanity or less seized by its understanding...than its own communal and collective life." This observation of Sri Aurobindo heightens our appreciation of the service rendered by this small but potent volume.

Its author, Professor of Law in Columbia University, is qualified to appraise the political forces whose struggle forms the crisis of our time. From the relative detachment of his professorial sanctum he can look back upon significant years spent in the maelstrom of international politics. As special adviser to the American Commission to Negotiate Peace after World War I, he took part in the first of his many international conferences. He was Assistant Secretary of State for the U.S.A. during the turbulent years 1938-44, and Ambassador to Brazil 1945-46.

The author justifies his daring to advance a hypothesis regarding the evolution—the life and death—of political forces, on the ground that "the condition of the political world at present requires boldness of scientific approach. Rather, explanation is called for from students of political science who have not yet attempted a synthesis, and have therefore left men as political animals to struggle in a world which appears to be anarchic." Cassirer, in *The Myth of the State*, avers that social science, and particularly the science of politics, is still so nebulous that efforts to put it on a rational footing bear about the same relationship to the political science which will one day exist as medieval astrology bears to modern astronomy.

Berle rejects as "poetic speculations" both the pessimistic prognostications of Spengler in his *Decline of the West* and the optimistic prophecies of Toynbee in his monumental *Study of History*. He ventures a hypothesis which he believes to be fairly based on the evidence of the centuries, a verdict which he feels carries rational conviction:

- I. The law of political force—of any kind or order or magnitude—is governed in its creation and continuance by natural laws which appear to be invariable and constant.

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II. There exists a law of selection of political forces somewhat analogous to the law of selection of species in the world of biology.

III. Selection favours political forces

- 1) which tend to approach universality within their field of application; and
- 2) which give to individuals a sense of harmony with the universal pattern.

Selection discards political forces

- 1) which are based on limitative conceptions such as exclusion, aggrandizement, hatred, and the like; and
- 2) which tend to concentrate power without modifying that power by imposing, in some form, corresponding responsibility.

A political force is composed of a "centrally attractive idea"—its nucleus—and an "apparatus", which is "a combination of methods, persuasion, incentives and pressures by which individuals are held in organization or relationship to achieve the ends sought by the political force." The apparatus may be mild, as in the case of a truly democratic political party, or severe, as in the totalitarian or police state. Where the apparatus is extreme, it tends to discard the original nuclear ideas and ideals, importing others that promise to serve better its drive towards greater power. Thus revolutions have gone astray, abandoning their original idealism. "Liberté, égalité, fraternité", the watchwords of the French Revolution, with its emphasis on individual freedom from various tyrannies, gave way within a decade of "liberations" of other peoples by military might to a Napoleon who discarded, in the end, the ideology of the Revolution in his pursuit of imperial ambitions.

The author traces also the steps by which the originally attractive and "harmless" thesis of the Hitlerian Revolution of 1933—the restoration of order, employment and economic benefit to Germany—was replaced by the Nazi apparatus with a quite separate group of notions whose central idea was that of a "universal empire", based on the right of Nazi racialists to rule other peoples because of their self-proclaimed innate physical, mental and even moral superiority.

The author points out the same tendency in the Russian Revolution. The original emphasis on economic and social liberation has gradually been overshadowed by the drive of the ruthless apparatus of the police state, with its purges and its mammoth slave labour camps, by machinations, under the shadow of the Red Army, to overthrow neighbouring govern-

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ments, and by aggressive diplomacy—all tending towards maximum aggrandisement of Soviet power.

Mr. Berle believes history indicates that “where the force of the apparatus and the force of the central idea are in balance the political force tends to be stable—that is, to survive. Where they are out of balance, the political force tends to disintegrate.” The apparatus may “throttle the central ideal, becoming a naked power mechanism doomed eventually to break up... because of its own internal animosities, and of its lack of ability to command acquiescence.” The author declares that “the facts indicate, indeed, that the nuclear conception of the Communist Revolution has already been strangled by its own apparatus, just as philosophical democracy was shattered by Napoleon.”

This study of the life and death of political forces leads to the conclusion that “a political force appears to be ‘good’ in proportion as its centrally attractive ideal approaches possibility of universal application.” Any such limitative ideal as that of perpetual enmity for all who oppose or disagree bears the seeds of disintegration. Likewise, those political forces are “good” when the central ideal itself severely restricts or prevents the apparatus and the men who constitute it from violating the central ideal. The domination of a self-perpetuating oligarchy, even a sizeable one, on the theory that the end justifies the means, tends therefore toward self-destruction, in the view of Dr. Berle.

When the author, however, describes Christianity as “the greatest world revolution in recorded history” he fails, we regret to say, to distinguish between its achievements as a moral and religious influence and its career as a political force. Its “triumph” on the stage of history he traces to the ideal of universal love taught and exemplified by the Christ, whose utter exclusion of hatred automatically inhibits any limitative quality. It is significant that Mr. Berle does not trouble to expound and elucidate his view anent the supposed victory of Christ in the course of Western Christendom. Was it not, in fact, precisely during the period of the Church’s rise to political power under Constantine and thereafter that it abandoned Jesus’ sublime principle of universal love in favor of the sword, not in the Gita’s spirit of devotion and equanimity, but with vindictive treatment of all opponents and dissenters as “enemies of Christ”? What became of the Christ’s magnanimous spirit of universality when the Church set itself up as a divine viceregency, a supreme court to brand and banish and burn “heretics” or, as in this genteel modern day, to hold to an exclusive and

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divisive position when human unity is essential for survival? However, one doubtful instance does not nullify the validity and importance of the central thesis of the book.

The author adopts Alexis Carrel's conclusion from the study of evolution, particularly from the extinction of prehistoric monsters, that adaptability, rather than specific, predetermined defence or offence is the quality that leads to political, as it did to animal survival. He says, "Indeed one of the most dangerous aspects of today's world-division lies precisely in the fact that the two principal ideologies now struggling for supremacy are both more than a century old—both probably approaching obsolescence in the light of the twentieth-century knowledge—both outdated."

Yet there is an important difference between liberal democracy and Leninist-Stalinist Communism. "The liberal conception of democratic nationalism is by its nature capable of absorbing new economic forms." This implies that it might discard, or modify substantially, a capitalism that had served its day.

"This is one of its greatest merits. Democratic procedure and popular participation offer precisely that opportunity—partly because they refuse to accept, as we have seen, the extreme apparatus of dictatorship, with accompanying denial of civil rights, machinery of a police state, and strangulation of the central concept. Leninist Communism as a political force has no such absorptive quality. In many, perhaps most, respects Leninism is more rigid even than the old king-state. It cannot absorb: it must conquer; it must liquidate where it cannot convert. Possibly conscious of this, the Leninist of today makes a religion of his rigidity, and even has his dialectic poets write hymns to the glory of the secret police. A liberal democrat can look objectively at the tenets of Communism and learn from them. It is of the essence of the Leninist conception that it has nothing to learn from the outside, and that it cannot be objective about anything."

Dr. Berle believes that the age of the accurate selection of political forces may be at hand. In any case, he sees our generation as inescapably in "the valley of decision." If it does not exercise with wisdom its selective function, Nature will see that her laws of selection are not violated with impunity. In that event the cost may be ghastly in an atomic era.

Not the disciple's zeal but stark necessity prompts the reviewer to a question or two. If we are indeed "in the valley of decision", and if, as

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the author avers, "the vast and terrible drama of this selection (of political forces) is opening throughout most of the world;" if "cool reason offers little basis for hope...that the grimmest of all forms of selection—selection by world war—can be ultimately avoided", then how can the author address himself to rational beings and leave untouched the all-important HOW? How can a significant portion of the world's citizenry be led to make a deliberate selection of the political forces that can mean survival and progress? How can the forces of democratic liberalism be mobilized to meet the crisis of the age? How can the non-governmental organizations of the world—labour unions, religious groups, organizations of women, youth, professional people, et al.—with some 450,000,000 members, be used as channels for intensive education in world citizenship?

Not prediction but prevention of disaster would seem to be the task of leaders as experienced and as wise as Dr. Berle. To be sure, we may be grateful, as Sri Aurobindo suggests, for a world *ordered* in the clash of its forces, rather than an infinite chaos; it is indeed better that we should see the wherefore of our doom, if doomed we are as a race. But is there not a Force that can master political and other forces, in the service of the grand design that underlies the drama of history? Is there not a Force greater than that of blind Samson which is bent on an egoistic triumph even if it means pulling down the pillars of civilization on himself and all besides?

There may be a certain comfort in the knowledge that the universe itself exercises "selection", whatever man may do, but the point is, how can man cooperate with the universe, with the Divine, in the creation of a sufficient number of conscious cooperators to turn the stream of history into a new channel? These are not mere rhetorical questions.

Studying this book has been a stimulating experience. It is clear and incisive in style and replete with rewarding insights. Its weakness is that of liberal intellectuals in being strong on analysis but weak in coming to grips with the problem of power.

JAY HOLMES SMITH

(2) Albert Schweitzer's Ethics

Albert Schweitzer's important work is contained in his four volumes "The Philosophy of Civilisation" ("Kulturphilosophie"). The second volume "Civilization and Ethics", which was originally written in 1923,

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contains the kernel of his thought on the problem of ethics and its relation to the modern world, and it is this book which forms the basis of this present review. I should like however, to state at the outset that whatever criticism is made here concerns Schweitzer's written work, and does not reflect on the great work of devotion for which he has given his life and surrendered his genius. For the past forty years he has devoted himself to an unpretentious and primitive hospital that was set up in the heart of French Equatorial Africa. It is a hospital for the sick Africans of the district, in an area that swarms with all the known tropical diseases. He gave up a brilliant and promising career for this. He was already a professor of philosophy, a theologian, and an accomplished musician. But he felt the inner call to serve humanity—in some humble, though practical way. A doctor-missionary was needed in Central Africa, and Schweitzer qualified for the post by studying medicine, and adding a fourth doctorate to his already triple doctorates in philosophy, theology and music. From 1913 he has been quietly serving this chosen section of humanity in his own humble and devoted way. The world has recently recognised his work by rewarding him with the Nobel Prize for Peace.

As we can expect, Schweitzer is an inveterate optimist and a firm believer in the ultimate betterment of the world; and being a man of action rather than of words, ethics (in practice) is for him the highest truth. For him human behaviour is the most practical concern of man, and this means not merely individual behaviour, but above all a sympathetic and helpful interest in the life of others. From this point of view he sees that three of the major interests of man's life,—his rational thought, his world experience, and his supra-rational experience (or mysticism),—are three streams that feed ethics and make it a living and enduring basis for life.

Ethics is both a personal and social activity. One sees the personal aspect of Ethics more developed in the Eastern systems, which are (or were) strongly influenced by a world-negating outlook that has tended to subordinate the wider social needs of humanity (outside the family and communal groups). On the other hand the personal aspect has been neglected in Western ethics, where a man is judged mainly on his social behaviour. Schweitzer believes that both Eastern and Western ethics are incomplete in themselves, and have to learn from each other in order to create a complete ethics for both the individual and social needs of the modern world. In this earlier book on ethics (mentioned above), Schweitzer reviews only the contribution of western philosophy—mainly German—to this problem, but in a later work

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he deals with the Indian contribution to ethics (including the Buddhist). This latter book is entitled "Indian Thought and its Development" (English publication 1934). In this book he shows how Eastern philosophy had developed its world-and life-negating outlook, while the West (as he shows in his earlier book) had developed an optimistic world affirmation. It was with these opposing factors that Sri Aurobindo had commenced "The Life Divine". But while Sri Aurobindo traced the reconciliation of these two negations as residing ultimately in the Oneness of the Divine, Schweitzer believes that the reconciliation can only come through Ethics,—which seems, one ventures to suggest, an individual solution, and not the universal solution that Sri Aurobindo propounds.

Schweitzer declares: "He who sacrifices his life to achieve any purpose for an individual or for humanity is practising life-affirmation". He who offers his own life to bring about something in the world which he regards as necessary, shows a sacrifice that is not life-negation, but life-affirmation which is the basis of true ethics. This is Schweitzer's reply to the world-negating asceticism which he saw dominant in India. He sees, however, that the great contribution of Eastern ethics is that it set self-perfection of the individual as the central factor of endeavour,—that is, right inwardness of human action, right ethical attitude of mind, and the true peace of the soul. This attitude led to the high aim of evaluating mysticism as the goal of life,—that is, a spiritual union with the infinite Being. This is expressed in the realisation of the One, both in oneself and in all things. Such mysticism, Schweitzer says, must be the basis of all ethics. But while Schweitzer leaves the matter there, Sri Aurobindo has gone further in declaring that mysticism is only fulfilled when Divine Love has entered into Life, and Life, through man, has become permeated with that Love. This is the basis of the next stage in the upward ascent of Life, when man becomes conscious of his true relation with God and the world, and realises the supreme Oneness; and hence he must strive to bring this realisation into his worldly life through an increasing mutual co-operation and an inner understanding between men, through the realisation of the Divine.

Schweitzer has analysed fully the problem regarding the incompleteness of world ethics, but his solution of it in terms of man and the universe alone (not mentioning the important place of God and the soul, which may be taken for granted but not expressed), leaves much to be desired, except in so far as it justifies his own action. Although he realises the incompleteness of both Eastern and Western thought, he does not see eye to eye with Sri

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Aurobindo when the latter says that India holds in her hands the key to the progress of humanity. He believes rather that Indian thought must turn more and more towards Western world-and life-affirmation; but he did not realise that Sri Aurobindo did not stop at that statement, but proceeded from that basis to deliver his life-affirming revelation of the all-embracing unitary Reality. When Schweitzer says, "we await the Indian thinker who will expound to us the mysticism of spiritual union with infinite Being as it is in itself," it would seem that his prognostication has been answered in Sri Aurobindo's mighty revelation in "The Life Divine" (which one supposes was not accessible to him at the time of his writing, since he seems to have been familiar with only a minor fragment of Sri Aurobindo's work).

It is significant, however, that through his own ethics in life Schweitzer has come very close to Sri Aurobindo's world-view of ethics, where ethics expresses also a deep reverence for Life, in its widest sense. The chief divergence is that Schweitzer bases his whole world-view on ethics, and hence shuts himself off from the Divine Knowledge and Truth. One feels that when he has found the Divine Truth from which Ethics itself is derived, and on which it wholly depends, he will have made the most valuable link the world now needs,—namely the bringing of the Divine Reality to the very centre of man's actions and doings in the world.

It is a pity that Schweitzer's writings are not so lucid and clear as one would wish, (and perhaps also his work suffers through translation from the original German). One feels, in reading him, to be in the dense jungle where he has made his home and life's work, and consequently his thought is as difficult to reach as he himself is in his sanctum. His main thesis in his "Civilization and Ethics" is largely overshadowed by a long drawn-out attempt to show the failure of Western thought and philosophy to come to grips with the living basis of ethics. Being purely an intellectual approach, it expressed the attempt of thought to impose its own law on life. Schweitzer shows that true ethics can only begin from the standpoint of life—with a reverence for life. Thought would then contribute to, and not impose itself on this ethical reverence. Because of its purely external and worldly outlook, western ethics has not been able to show the individual how to deal naturally and directly from his own inner being with the world around him. It has concentrated on social relationship without considering the very springs of personal action. Ethical sayings and commandments are not sufficient without the deeper awakening within the individual concerning his true relation with others. We might say that while India has contributed

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the highest ideal of individual ethics (based on the concept of brahma-charya), the West has contributed through Christianity the applied ethics of active devotion to one's neighbour.

Schweitzer here—and rightly so—distinguishes between the real ethics of Christ's teaching, and the modern teachings of the Church. We are inclined to agree with Schweitzer when he says that Christ taught men to practise unbounded devotion to one another, not with the aim of universal brotherhood, but in order to attain the necessary *inner* perfection needed to enter into the kingdom of God. The worldly aim of brotherhood came into the Christian teachings only after the influence of the Greek tradition had impressed itself on European thought (through the writings of Seneca and Epictetus). Thereafter the external affairs of life became the dominant concern, and the inner development was of lesser account. This process was aided by the growth of scientific knowledge. The decline of ethics in the West was a natural consequence of this purely worldly outlook, as the efforts to erect a basis of ethics, of the philosophers of the 18th. and 19th. centuries—from Kant to Hegel—show. These philosophers by taking the purely intellectual approach to ethics produced systems that had little practical basis in life. Schweitzer insists—and rightly so—that ethics must begin from within the individual himself, and must be primarily based on life and action in life. It is individual action that ultimately has to forge new paths in ethics. And here we have to see that Schweitzer's work in the depths of Africa is the real expression of his ethics, and not so much his books. We can have nothing but admiration for the devotion, personal sacrifice, and indifference to gain, which the forty years in the equatorial jungle has demanded of him. He himself shows in a practical and enduring way the true relation between ethics and life, which is worth more than a library of books on the subject.

Although Schweitzer sees mysticism as an essential factor in a fuller life, it is from the point of view of mysticism not as an end in itself, but returning to life and giving to it a harmony, balance and deeper meaning of the world and to one's actions. Here we see how naturally Schweitzer's conclusions meet these problems discussed so comprehensively by Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo shows that life in its present stage, based on the law of mutual devouring, is not the final state or condition of life. There is an ascent of Life, and the first steps, which are now looming clearer to the world, demand that mutual aid, common understanding, and co-operation become the motives of men's actions. This will come with the growing

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consciousness in man of Divine Love, and its action in the world. It is here that self-giving comes in,—a self-giving with no idea of gain or reward behind it, but a frank and open giving where the very openness itself becomes a widening of consciousness. Schweitzer has certainly shown in his own selfless devotion the truth of this self-giving in action.

Criticism is humbled and silenced by this high and noble example of Schweitzer's. Ultimately we have to say that Schweitzer is right, in his own life's action and standpoint, and that the world has yet very much to learn from this one man's most unostentatious work.

N. PEARSON.

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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - Sri Aurobindo.

EDITORIALS*

REALISATION, PAST AND FUTURE

THE whole material and physical world, the whole earth—I mention earth, because we are concerned directly and much more with it than other regions—has been till now governed by forces of consciousness that come from what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind. Even the thing man has named God is a force, a power in the Overmind. The entire universe has been, so to say, under the domination of this status of consciousness. Even then, you have to pass through many intermediary grades or levels to arrive at the Overmind and when you reach there the first impression is that of a dazzling light that almost blinds you. But one can and has to press on and go beyond. Sri Aurobindo says, the rule of the Overmind is precisely coming to its end and the rule of the Supermind will replace it. All the past spiritual experiences were concerned with the Overmind: so it is a thing known to all who have found the Divine and are identified with Him. What Sri Aurobindo says is this that there is something more than the Overmind,

* Based on the Mother's Talks

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something that lies a step higher and that it is now the turn of this higher status to come down and reign. We need not talk much of Overmind, because all the saints and seers, all religions and spiritual disciplines, scriptures and philosophies have spoken about it at length. All the gods known and familiar to men are there in its Pantheon. What we want, what is needed at present is a new revelation, a manifestation in a new manner of which very few were conscious in the past. We are not here merely to repeat the past.

But it is so difficult. It is difficult for people to come out of experiences they have had, of what they have heard and read about always and everywhere. It is difficult for them not to think of the Supermind in terms of the Overmind, not to confuse the Supermind with the Overmind. They are unable to conceive of anything beyond or different. Sri Aurobindo used to say always that his Yoga began where all the past Yogas ended: in order to realise his Yoga one must have already arrived at the extreme limit of what the ancients realised. In other words, one must have had already the perception of the Divine, the union and identification with the Divine. This divinity, Sri Aurobindo says, is the Divine of the Overmind which is itself something quite unthinkable for the human consciousness, and even to reach there one has to rise through many planes of consciousness and, as I said, one gets dazzled and dazed even at this level.

There are beings of the vital who, whenever they appear to man, are taken by him for the supreme godhead. You may call it a disguise, but it is a very successful disguise, for people who see it most often get thoroughly convinced that what they see is indeed God himself. And yet such a god is only a vital being. Even so, the beings of the Overmind are stupendous in comparison with us, human beings, who are truly bewildered whenever we come in contact with such entities. And Supermind and supramental beings are yet beyond. So you realise the distance to be covered.

But there is a kind of Grace that comes to your help. If the scientist had again to go over all the experiments that have been done, all what others have found in the past in his line in order to make a further progress, to come to a new discovery, then he will have to pass his whole life in repeating the past and will have no time for anything else. The scientist just opens instead a book or consults another person who is conversant with the past and gets all the knowledge he requires of it. Sri Aurobindo wanted to do something like that in the spiritual domain. He asks you to gather the experience of the past,—it is all there recorded in earth's history, and pass on; basing yourself upon that, you rise up to still higher ranges.

REALISATION, PAST AND FUTURE

You may pertinently ask, however, why we have not started with over-mental beings, we should have had here, say, Vivekanandas only and not ordinary frail human creatures.

You think the work would have been easier? Such beings, on the contrary, would have been less manageable and malleable. For what is most difficult is to convince someone who has had already a realisation. He believes he has reached the goal and no further progress is necessary for him. It generally happens especially to men who have made effort and realised the object of the effort that they stop with that, because they feel they have reached their final goal. They get settled and fixed there. It was their personal goal and they have got it. Their brain gets crystallised and their consciousness fossilised. They will live there all their life and will never know how to move. So I say, those who have had an experience or a realisation in themselves are not necessarily the most advanced. Such a person lacks an element of simplicity, modesty, plasticity that spontaneously come to one who feels that he has not grown fully and has to develop further.

A "realised person", if I may say so graphically and somewhat strongly, is a finished product to be kept in a glass-case for show in a museum. He is a sample showing what has been done and what could be done. But you do not have there the stuff to do more. I would prefer for my work to have someone who may have little knowledge, but who has much good will, a great aspiration, who feels within him this flame, this need to go on. I say, he may know little, he may have realised even less, but here is good material with which one can go far, very far. Besides, there is another point to note. As in mountain-climbing a guide is very useful, even indispensable, who can show you the proper way and make it easy for you to climb higher and higher altitudes, so in spiritual ascension, a guide, if you have the good fortune to meet one, will help you to rise much higher than you could do yourself with your own personal strength and your own personal view of a fixed goal—you are not proud of your discovery and you do not waste time or energy in useless searches and enquiries.

That is why I prefer children—children in body or in soul—and fear grown-ups steeped in erudition and realisation.

30-9-1953.

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DISEASES AND ACCIDENTS

If the body is ill, does the mind too fall ill?

Not necessarily, to be sure. Illnesses are, as I have told you, generally a dislocation among the different parts of the being, a kind of disharmony. It may well be that the body has not followed the movement of progress, it might have lagged behind while the other parts have, on the contrary, made progress. In that case there is an unbalance, a breaking of harmony and that produces an illness, I mean, in the body, for the mind and the vital also might remain all right. There are many people who have been ill for years, suffering from terrible and incurable diseases, and still maintained their mental power marvellously clear and active and continuing to make progress in that domain. There was a French poet, a very good poet, Sully Prudhomme, by name; he was mortally ill and it was during that time that he wrote his most beautiful poems. He was always in a very good humour, charming, smiling, pleasant to everyone even while his body was going to bits. You may remember how the great Louis XIV used to joke and laugh, while, in his last days, his body was being lacerated and given over to leeches by his doctors and surgeons. It depends upon individual and individual. For there are people of the other type who get thoroughly disturbed from head to foot if there is the slightest bodily indisposition. Each one has his own combination of the elements.

There is of course a relation between the mind and the body, quite a close relation. In most cases it is the mind that makes the body ill, at least it is the most important factor in the illness. I have said, there are people who keep their mind clear although their body suffers. But it is very rare and very difficult to keep the body healthy when the mind suffers or is unbalanced. It is not impossible, but very very exceptional. For I explained to you that it is the mind which is the master of the body, the body is an obedient and obliging servant. Unfortunately one does not usually know how to make use of one's mind, not only so, one makes bad use of it and as bad as possible. The mind possesses a considerable power of formation and of direct action on the body. It is precisely this power which is used by people to make their body ill. As soon as there is something which does not go well, the mind begins to worry about it, makes formations of coming catastrophes, indulges in all kinds of imaginary dangers ahead. Now, instead of thus letting the mind run amuck and do havoc, if the same energy were used for a better

DISEASES AND ACCIDENTS

purpose, if good formations were made, namely, giving self-confidence to the body, telling it that there is nothing to be anxious about, it is only a passing unease and so on, in that case, the body would be put in a right condition of receptivity and the illness pass away quietly even as it came. That is how the mind is to be taught to give good suggestions to the body and not to throw mud into it. Marvellous results follow if you do it properly.

When an accident happens there is in it a critical moment. For example, you slip and you fall. Now between the moment when you slip and the moment when you fall, there is just a fraction of a second when you are, as it were, given the choice. It can either be nothing or something very serious. Only to make the choice you must have a perfectly awakened consciousness and your being must be constantly in contact with the psychic. There is no time to bring in the contact, one must already be in contact. So, just between the slip and the fall, if the mental and psychic formation is sufficient, you come out unscathed. If, on the contrary, the body thinks, as it is its habit, "Oh, I have slipped" and becomes apprehensive—it is, as I say, a matter of a fraction of a second, even less—then the catastrophe happens. You have the capacity to prevent an accident happening; you are given the choice at a momentary moment. But for that you must learn to be wide awake, to be fully conscious. When you are in that condition you can prevent an accident, you can stop an illness coming into you. But it is just the matter of a split second and you must not miss it.

And yet there is still another moment. When you have fallen and are already hurt; you have still now the open chance whether it will turn well or ill, whether it will stop at being just a mishap or become something really serious or as serious as possible. I do not know if you have noticed that there are certain people who do not seem to miss any occasion for an accident. Every time there is a possibility, they have it. And the accident is never slight, it tends to be serious and often very serious. People say, what an unlucky fellow! Chance is never on his side! etc. etc. But all that is sheer ignorance. Everything depends absolutely upon the working of the consciousness. I could cite any number of examples and such striking examples. There are people who might have been killed but came out of the accident safe and sound. There are others for whom what was quite harmless in the beginning turns worse and worse and proves in the end, perhaps, fatal.

But you must understand it is not the working of thought, ordinary thought. The thought may be as good in one as in the other. It all depends upon the moment of choice. There are people who know how to react in the

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right manner and at the right moment. It is the character that matters. Such people have a wakeful, alert consciousness; they are not asleep; they are on the watch constantly within themselves. And at the right moment they call for the aid, they invoke the divine force, yes, exactly at the right moment. And the danger is warded off. On the other hand, whenever there is something going wrong, some dislocation in the being, if you are seized by fear, dark foreboding or defeatism in the consciousness, then you are done for.

It is not the mind, as I say, which decides. It is an inner attitude, a poise of the being, the right consciousness which reacts in the right manner. Its effect goes very far. You do not know what a power it is. Even if it is there just for a fraction of a second, it works miracles. Only it must be there already, you must be already in the state of wakefulness, you cannot order it at the moment, you have no time.

You may say again that it is the Divine Grace that saves. But would you explain to me how it works? It would be interesting indeed to find out who had precisely the awakened consciousness, had the faith and the inner trust, had called for the help and had in him that which answered automatically—and even in a way unconsciously—to something that came in. Human intelligence is a relative thing and has varying degrees of power. Usually it understands by contrasts and contraries. It does not understand a truth in its absoluteness. For example, I have received hundreds of letters thanking me because they were saved from dangers. But I do not remember to have received a letter thanking me because things were normal and nothing had happened. Men perceive the action of Grace only when there is the atmosphere of the pessimist and there is a danger and they have escaped from it, that is to say, when there is already the beginning of the accident, when the accident has come to pass. When they come out of the danger safely only then they take note of the force that saved. Otherwise they would not have even thought of it. If the voyage they undertook came off without any accident they would not think of any action of Grace present there. They would take it as a matter of course. But precisely because it is so, there may be acting here a Grace of a higher order and there may be existing already a deeper preexistent harmony between the consciousness of the person and the higher force to which it responds. The chance of an accident is already the beginning of the dislocation I spoke of. But the situation becomes complicated if it is a case of collective accident. The result here depends upon the atmosphere of the persons involved. It is the proportion of these two

DISEASES AND ACCIDENTS

elements in the personnel of a collective accident that determines the character and magnitude of the accident.

I will tell you a story, I mean a true story, in this connection. There was a pilot who was considered what is called an *ace* among his fellowmen in the first Great War. He was an extraordinary aviator and the hero of many victories. Nothing had happened to him at any time. But towards the end of his life, an event occurred—some private tragedy—and all at once he had the feeling that something was going to happen to him; an accident perhaps, and it was all finished with him. He had come out of the war but was still in the army. He wanted to make a flight to South Africa, from France right up to the south of Africa. He started from France and made for Madagascar, so far as I remember, and then wanted to fly back to France. Now, my brother was at that time the Governor of Congo and needed to join his post as soon as possible. He asked for a place in the aeroplane of the pilot I am speaking about. It was not a regular service plane, but one of those used for experimentation to show what the machines were capable of and the skill of the airmen. Many tried to dissuade my brother from making the journey, saying that these adventurous trips were always dangerous. My brother however did not mind the risk. Nothing serious happened, but for a slight breakdown in the middle of the Sahara which was easily got over, and the plane made safe journey and deposited him at his place in Congo. The plane continued further down, to Madagascar, as I said. Now the pilot started back, he did half the journey, his plane crashed and he was killed forthwith. I shall explain to you what really the matter was. What happened had to happen, it was a foregone conclusion. My brother had an absolute faith in his destiny, a certainty that nothing would touch him. The consciousness of the other was on the contrary full of doubt and apprehension. So the mixture of the two atmospheres brought about this that in the first instance the accident could not be prevented, but it stopped short of catastrophe. But once the destiny of my brother was not there with the machine,—like Caesar's destiny that made the boatman go safely across the river through a storm—the protection was also withdrawn and the pilot had to go down under the full blast of his bad fate. I can narrate another analogous story, it is with regard to a ship. There were two persons, husband and wife. They went by air to Indo-China. They had an accident, a very serious accident. All were killed except only these two. Now they had to return to France. They did not want to travel by air, they had the experience of it. So they took a boat, I mean a ship, which they thought would be quite safe. Now what happened

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was absolutely unexpected, quite extraordinary. In the middle of the Red Sea, in broad daylight, the ship struck against a reef and sank—a thing that does not happen even once perhaps in a million cases. All the passengers were drowned except, miraculous again to say, the pair. There are people like that, they carry misfortune with them, but the misfortune is for others, they themselves escape somehow.

If you look at the thing in an ordinary way, you do not notice it. But the fact is there. You must be very careful about your associations. An unfortunate association may prove disastrous to you. The *karma* of others may fall upon you, unless you have the inner knowledge, the vision and the necessary power. If you see a person with something like a dark whirl around avoid him at all cost. The moral of it all is that it is very useful to look into things a little more deeply than to observe the surface only.

23-12-1953

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

All is not settled when a cause is humanly lost and hopeless;
all is settled, only when the soul renounces its effort.

SRI AUROBINDO

ILION

(A FRAGMENT)

GRANDIOSE, calm in her gait, imperious, awing the regions,
Hera came in her pride, the spouse of Zeus and his sister.
As at her birth from the foam of the spaces white Aphrodite
Rose in the cloud of her golden hair like the moon in its halo.
Aegis-bearing Athene, shielded and helmeted, answered
Rushing the call and the heavens thrilled with the joy of her foot-steps
Dumbly repeating her name, as insulted and trampled by beauty
Thrill might the soul of a lover and cry out the name of its tyrant.
Others there were as mighty; for Artemis, archeress ancient,
Came on her sandals lightning-tasselled. Up the vast incline
Shaking the world with the force of his advent thundered Poseidon;
Space grew full of his stride and his cry. Immortal Apollo
Shone and his silver clang was heard with alarm in our kingdoms.
Ares' impetuous eyes looked forth from a cloud-drift of splendour;
Themis' steps appeared and Ananke, the mystic Erinnyes
Nor was Hephaestus' flaming strength from his father divided.
Even the ancient Dis to arrive dim-featured, eternal,
Seemed; but his rays are the shades and his voice is the call of the silence.

Into the courts divine they crowded, radiant, burning,
Perfect in utter grace and light. The joy of their spirits
Calls to eternal Time and the glories of Space are his answer:
Thence were these bright worlds born and persist by the throb of their
heart-beats.

Not in the forms that mortals have seen when assisted they scatter
Mists of this earthly dust from their eyes in their moments of greatness
Shone those unaging Powers; nor as in our centuries radiant
Mortal-seeming bodies they wore when they mixed with our nations.
Then the long youth of the world had not faded still out of our natures,
Flowers and the sunlight were felt and the earth was glad like a mother.
Then for a human delight they were masked in this denser vesture
Earth desires for her bliss,—thin veils, for the god through them glimmered.
Quick were men's days with the throng of the brilliant presences near them:
Gods from the wood and the valley, gods from the obvious wayside,

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Gods on the secret hills leaped out from their light on the mortal.
 Oft in the haunt and the grove they met with our kind and their touches
 Seized and subjected our clay to the greatness of passions supernal,
 Grasping the earthly virgin and forcing heaven on this death-dust.
 Glorifying human beauty Apollo roamed in our regions
 Clymene when he pursued or yearned in vain for Mæssa;
 Glorifying earth with a human-seeming face of the beauty
 Brought from her heavenly climes Aphrodite mixed with Anchises.
 Glimpsed in the wilds were the Satyrs, seen in the woodlands the Graces,
 Dryad and Naiad in river and forest, Oreads haunting
 Glens and the mountain-glades where they played with the manes of our lions
 Glimmered on death-claimed eyes; for the gods then were near us and
 clasped us,
 Heaven leaned down in love with our clay and yearned to its transience.
 But we have coarsened in heart and in mood; we have turned in our natures
 Nearer our poorer kindred, leaned to the ant and the ferret.
 Sight we have darkened with sense and power we have stifled with labour,
 Likened in mood to the things we gaze at and are in our vestures:
 Therefore we toil unhelped; we are left to our weakness and blindness.
 Not in those veils now they rose to their skies, but like loose-fitting mantles
 Dropped in the vestibules huge of their vigorous realms that besiege us,
 All that reminded of earth; then clothed with raiment of swiftness
 Straight they went quivering up in a glory like fire or the storm-blast.
 Even those natural vestures of puissance they leave when they enter
 Mind's more subtle fields and agree with its limitless regions
 Peopled by creatures of bliss and forms more true than earth's shadows,—
 Mind that, pure from this density, throned in her splendours immortal,
 Looks up at Light and suffers bliss from ineffable kingdoms
 Where beyond Mind and its rays is the gleam of a glory supernal:
 There our sun cannot shine and our moon has no place for her lustres,
 There our lightnings flash not, nor fire of these spaces is suffered.
 They with bodies impalpable here to our touch and our seeing,
 But for a higher delight, to a brighter sense, with more sweetness
 Palpable there and visible, thrilled with a lordlier joyance,
 Came to the courts of Zeus and his heavens sang to their footsteps.
 Harmonies flowed through the blissful coils of the kingdoms of rapture.

SRI AUROBINDO

HYMN TO INDRA¹

1. O Indra, fill us with soundness and a *movement*²—victorious and of enduring force, utterly abundant *to our desire*.³

2. O thou by whose strong action we through the destruction of their limiting hold *encounter successfully*⁴ the obstructing gods, O hammerer of the foe.⁵

3. O Indra, O Hammerer, smiting we hurl abroad the Vajra; may we wholly conquer in fight our jealous foes.

4. We, O Indra, by the armed gods and by thee joined to us in Yoga, put forth constantly our strength in war.

5. Mighty indeed is Indra and supreme, may the strength of the Mahat be with the wielder of the lightning as the sky is variedly brilliant with *the wideness*⁶ that fills it.

6. For he enjoyeth alike whether in the safe keeping of one little among men or of the *thoughtful wise*.⁷

7. He that is a swallowing gulf devouring freely the nectar, and like a sea he drinketh these wide waters as if they were *pools*.⁸

8. Therefore is the soul's brilliant strong-actioned laud of truth like a ripe branch to the giver.

9. Therefore do thy puissances, and the expansions of thee, O Indra, become active at once in awareness to the giver that *hath the power to contain them*.⁹

10. Therefore are the soul's desirable (and noble things) and its praise and adoration (to be declared to) for Indra that he may drink the nectar-juice.

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¹ Rig Veda 1. 8

Rishi: Madhucchandasa

² Or, delight

³ Or, for our expansion

⁴ Or, stay the activity of

⁵ *Tvotāso* - provisional

⁶ Or, wide one

⁷ Or, strong in thought

⁸ *Kākudah* - doubtful

⁹ *Māvate* - provisional

PURNA YOGA*

I

THE ENTIRE PURPOSE OF YOGA

BY Yoga we can rise out of falsehood into truth, out of weakness into force, out of pain and grief into bliss, out of bondage into freedom, out of death into immortality, out of darkness into light, out of confusion into purity, out of imperfection into perfection, out of self-division into unity, out of Maya into God. All other utilisation of Yoga is for special and fragmentary advantages not always worth pursuing. Only that which aims at possessing the fullness of God is Purna Yoga; the sadhaka of the Divine Perfection is the Purna Yogin.

Our aim must be to be perfect as God in His being and bliss is perfect, pure as He is pure, blissful as He is blissful, and, when we are ourselves *siddhas* in Purna Yoga, to bring all mankind to the same divine perfection. It does not matter if for the present we fall short of our aim, so long as we give ourselves wholeheartedly to the attempt and by living constantly in it and for it move forward even two inches upon the road; even that will help to lead humanity out of struggle and twilight in which it now dwells into the luminous joy which God intends for us. But whatever our immediate success, our unvarying aim must be to perform the whole journey and not lie down content in any wayside stage or imperfect resting place.

All Yoga which takes us entirely away from the world, is a high but narrow specialisation of divine *tapasya*. God in His perfection embraces everything; we also must become all-embracing.

God in His ultimate existence beyond all manifestation and all knowledge, is the Absolute Parabrahman; in relation to the world He is that which transcends all universal existence while regarding it or in turning away from it; He is that which contains and upholds the universe, He is that which becomes the universe and He is the universe and everything which it contains.

* From old writings

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He is also Absolute and Supreme Personality playing in the universe and as the universe; in the universe He appears to be its Soul and Lord, as the universe He appears to be the motion or process of the Will of the Lord and to become all the subjective and objective results of the motion. All the states of the Brahman, the transcendent, the continent, the universal, the individual are informed and sustained by the divine Personality. He is both the Existent and the state of existence. We call the state of existence the Impersonal Brahman, the Existent the Personal Brahman. There is no difference between them except to the play of our consciousness; for every impersonal state depends upon a manifest or secret Personality and can reveal the Personality which it holds and veils, and every Personality attaches to itself and can plunge itself into an impersonal existence. This they can do because Personality and Impersonality are merely different states of self-consciousness in our Absolute Being.

Philosophies and religions dispute about the priority of different aspects of God and different Yogins, Rishis and Saints have preferred this or that philosophy or religion. Our business is not to dispute about any of them, but to realise and become all of them, not to follow after any aspect to the exclusion of the rest, but to embrace God in all His aspects and beyond aspect.

God descending into world in various forms has consummated on this earth the mental and bodily form which we call humanity.

He has manifested in the world through the play of all-governing Soul with its own formative Will or Shakti, a rhythm of existence of which Matter is the lowest term and pure being the highest. Mind and Life stand upon Matter (*Manas* and *Prāṇa* on *Anmān*) and make the lower half of world-existence (*aparārdha*); pure Consciousness and pure Bliss proceed out of pure Being (*Chit* and *Ananda* out of *Sat*) and make the upper half of world-existence (*parārdha*). Pure Idea (*Vijnana*) stands as the link between the two. These seven principles or terms of existence are the basis of the seven-fold world of the Purāṇas (*Satyaloka*, *Tapas*, *Jana*, *Mahar*, *Swar*, *Bhuvar* and *Bhur*).

The lower hemisphere in this arrangement of consciousness consists of the three *vyāhritis* of the Veda, "Bhur, Bhuvah, Swar"; they are states of consciousness in which the principles of the upper world are expressed or try to express themselves under different conditions. Pure in their own homes, they are in this foreign country subject to perverse, impure and disturbing combinations and workings. The ultimate object of life is to

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get rid of the perversity, impurity and disturbance and express them perfectly in these other conditions. Our life on this earth is a divine poem that we are translating into earthly language or a strain of music which we are rendering into words.

Being in Sat is one in multiplicity, one that regards its multiplicity without being lost or confused in it and multiplicity that knows itself as one without losing the power of multiple play in the universe. Under the conditions of mind, life and body, *ahamkāra* is born, the subjective or objective form of consciousness is falsely taken for self-existent being, the body for an independent reality and the ego for an independent personality; the one loses itself in us in its multiplicity and when it recovers its unity, finds it difficult, owing to the nature of mind, to preserve its play of multiplicity. Therefore when we are absorbed in world, we miss God in Himself, when we see God, we miss Him in the world. Our business is to break down and dissolve the mental ego and get back to our divine unity without losing our power of individual and multiple existence in the universe.

Consciousness in Chit is luminous, free, illimitable and effective; that which it is aware of as Chit (*jñānaśakti*) it fulfills infallibly as Tapas (*kriyāśakti*); for Jnana Shakti is only the stable and comprehensive, Kriya Shakti only the motional and intensive form of one self-luminous Conscious Being. They are one power of conscious force of God (Chit-Shakti of Sat-Purusha). But in the lower hemisphere, under the conditions of mind, life and body, the luminousness becomes divided and broken up into uneven rays, the freedom trammelled by egoism and unequal forms; the effectiveness veiled by the uneven play of forces. We have, therefore, states of consciousness, non-consciousness and false consciousness, knowledge and ignorance and false knowledge, effective force and inertia and ineffective force. Our business is by renouncing our divided and unequal individual force of action and thought into the one, undivided universal Chit-shakti of Kali to replace our egoistic activities by the play in our body of the universal Kali and thus exchange blindness and ignorance for knowledge and ineffective human strength for the divine effective Force.

Delight in Ananda is pure, unmixed, one and yet multitudinous. Under the conditions of mind, life and body it becomes divided, limited, confused and misdirected and owing to shocks of unequal forces and uneven distribution of Ananda subject to the duality of positive and negative movements, grief and joy, pain and pleasure. Our business is to dissolve these dualities by breaking down their cause and plunge ourselves into the ocean of divine

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bliss, one, multitudinous, evenly distributed (*sama*), which takes delight from all things and recoils painfully from none.

In brief, we have to replace dualities by unity, egoism by divine consciousness, ignorance by divine wisdom, thought by divine knowledge, weakness, struggle and effort by self-contented divine force, pain and false pleasure by divine bliss. This is called in the language of Christ bringing down the kingdom of heaven on earth, or in modern language, realising and effectuating God in the world.

Humanity is, upon earth, the form of life chosen for this human aspiration and divine accomplishment; all other forms of life either do not need it or are ordinarily incapable of it unless they change into humanity. The divine fullness is therefore the sole real aim of humanity. It has to be effected in the individual in order that it may be effected in the race.

Humanity is a mental existence in a living body; its basis is matter, its centre and instrument mind and its medium life. This is the condition of average or natural humanity.

In every human being there is concealed (*avyākṛta*) the four higher principles. Mahas, pure ideality in *vijñāna*, is not a *vyāhṛti* but the source of the *vyāhṛtis*, the bank upon which mental, vital and bodily action draw and turn its large and infinite wealth into small coin of the lower existence. Vijnana being the link between the divine state and the human animal is the door of escape for man into the supernatural or divine humanity.

Inferior mankind gravitates downward from mind towards life and body; average mankind dwells constant in mind limited by and looking towards life and body; superior mankind levitates upward either to idealised mentality or to pure *īśā*, direct truth of knowledge and spontaneous truth of existence; supreme mankind rises to divine beatitude and from that level either goes upward to pure Sat and Parabrahman or remains to beatify its lower members and raise to divinity in itself and others this human existence.

The man who dwells in the higher or divine and now hidden hemisphere of his consciousness, having rent the veil, is the true superman and the last product of that progressive self-manifestation of God in world, Spirit out of matter, which is now called the principle of evolution.

To rise into divine existence, force, light and bliss and recast in that mould all mundane existence is the supreme aspiration of religion and the complete practical aim of Yoga. The aim is to realise God in the universe, but it cannot be done without realising God transcendent of the universe.

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II

PARABRAHMAN, MUKTI AND HUMAN THOUGHT SYSTEMS

Parabrahman is the Absolute, and because It is the Absolute, it cannot be reduced into terms of knowledge. You can know the Infinite in a way, but you cannot know the Absolute.

All things in existence or non-existence are symbols of the Absolute created in self-consciousness (Chid-Atman); by its symbols the Absolute can be known so far as the symbols reveal or hint at it, but even the knowledge of the whole sum of symbols does not amount to real knowledge of the Absolute. You can become Parabrahman; you cannot know Parabrahman. Becoming Parabrahman means going back through self-consciousness into Parabrahman, for you already are That, only you have projected yourself forward in self-consciousness into its terms or symbols, Purusha and Prakriti through which you uphold the universe. Therefore, to become Parabrahman void of terms or symbols you must cease out of the universe.

By becoming Parabrahman void of Its self-symbols you do not become anything you are not already, nor does the universe cease to operate. It only means that God throws back out of the ocean of manifest consciousness one stream or movement of Himself into that from which all consciousness proceeded.

All who go out of universe consciousness, do not necessarily go into parabrahman. Some go into undifferentiated Nature (*Avyākṛita Prakṛiti*), some lose themselves in God, some pass into a dark state of non-recognition of universe, (*Asat, Shunya*), some into a luminous state of non-recognition of universe—Pure undifferentiated Atman, Pure Sat or Existence-Basis of universe,—some into a temporary state of deep sleep (*Sushupti*) in the impersonal principles of Ananda, Chit or Sat. All these are forms of release and the ego gets from God by His Maya or Prakriti the impulse towards any one of them to which the supreme Purusha chooses to direct him. Those whom He wishes to liberate, yet keep in the world, He makes *jīvanmuktas* or sends them out again as His *vibhūtis*, they consenting to wear for the divine purposes a temporary veil of Avidyā, which does not at all bind them and which they can rend or throw off very easily.

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Therefore to lust after becoming Parabrahman is a sort of luminous illusion or sattwic play of Maya; for in reality there is none bound or none free and none needing to be freed and all is only God's Lila, Parabrahman's play of manifestation. God uses this sattwic Maya in certain egos in order to draw them upwards in the line of His special purpose and for these egos it is the only right and possible path.

But the aim of our Yoga is Jivanmukti in the universe; we have to live released in the world, not released out of the world, not because we need to be freed or for any other reason, but because that is God's will in us.

The Jivanmukta has, for perfect knowledge and self-fulfilment to stand on the threshold of Parabrahman, but not to cross the threshold. The statement he brings back from the threshold is that That is and we are That, but what That is or is not, words cannot describe, nor mind discriminate.

Parabrahman being the Absolute is indescribable by any name or definite conception. It is not Being or Non-Being, but something of which Being and Non-Being are primary symbols; not Atman or un-Atman or Maya; not Personality or Impersonality; not Quality or Non-Quality; not Consciousness or Non-Consciousness; not Bliss or Non-Bliss; not Purusha or Prakriti; not god nor man nor animal; not release nor bondage; but something of which all these are primary or derivative, general or particular symbols. Still, when we say Parabrahman is not this or that, we mean that It cannot in its essentiality be limited to this or that symbol or any sum of symbols; in a sense Parabrahman is all this and all this is Parabrahman. There is nothing else which all this can be. Parabrahman being Absolute is not subject to logic, for logic applies only to the determinate. We talk confusion if we say that the Absolute cannot manifest the determinate and therefore the universe is false or non-existent. The very nature of the Absolute is that we do not know what it is or is not, what it can do or cannot do; we have no reason to suppose that there is anything it cannot do or that its Absoluteness is limited by any kind of impotency. We experience spiritually that when we go beyond everything else we come to something Absolute; we experience spiritually that the universe is in the nature of a manifestation proceeding, as it were, from the Absolute; but all these words and phrases are merely intellectual terms trying to express the inexpressible. We must state what we see as best we can, but need not dispute what others see or state; rather we must accept and in our own system locate and account for what they have seen and stated. Our only dispute is with those who

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deny credit to the vision or freedom and value to the statements of others; not with those who are content with stating their own vision.

A philosophical or religious system is only a statement of that arrangement of existence in universe which God has revealed to us as our status of being. It is given in order that the mind may have something to stand upon while we act in Prakriti. But our vision need not be precisely the same in arrangement as the vision of others, nor is the form of thought that suits our mentality bound to suit a mentality differently constituted. Firmness, without dogmatism, in our own system, toleration, without weakness, of all other systems should therefore be our intellectual outlook.

You will find disputants questioning your system on the ground that it is not consistent with this or that Shashtra or this or that great authority, whether philosophers, saints or Avatars. Remember then that realisation and experience are alone of essential importance. What Shankara argued or Vivekananda conceived intellectually about existence or even what Ramakrishna stated from his multitudinous and varied realisations, is only of value to you so far as you are moved by God to accept and renew it in your own experience. The opinions of thinkers and saints and Avatars should be accepted as hints but not as fetters. What matters to you is what you have seen or what God in His universal personality or impersonally or again personally in some teacher, Guru or path-finder undertakes to show to you in the path of Yoga.

III

God or Para Purusha is Parabrahman unmanifest and inexpressible turned towards a certain kind of manifestation or expression, of which the two eternal terms are Atman and Jagati, Self and Universe. Atman becomes in self-symbol all existences in the universe; so too, the universe when known, resolves all its symbols into Atman. God being Parabrahman is Himself Absolute, neither Atman nor Maya nor un-Atman, neither Being nor Not-Being, (*Sat, Asat*), neither Becoming nor non-Becoming (*Sambhuti, Asambhuti*), neither Quality nor non-Quality (*Saguna, Nirguna*); neither Consciousness nor non-Consciousness (*Chaitanya, Jada*); neither Soul nor Nature (*Purusha, Prakriti*), neither Bliss nor non-Bliss; neither man, nor god nor animal; He is beyond all these things, He maintains and contains all these things in Himself as world; He is and becomes all these things.

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The only difference between Parabrahman and Parapurusha is that we think of the first as something beyond our universe-existence, expressed here indeed, but still inexpressible, and of the second as something approaching our universe-existence, inexpressible indeed, but still here expressed. It is as if, in reading a translation of the Ramayana or Homer's Iliad, we were to look at the unapproachable something no translator can seize and say "This is not the Ramayana," "This is not the Iliad" and yet, looking at the comparative adequacy of the expressions which do succeed in catching something of the original spirit and intention, were at the same time to say "This is Valmiki" "This is Homer,". There is no other difference except this of standpoint. The Upanishads speak of the Absolute Parabrahman as Tat; they say Sa when they speak of the Absolute Para-Purusha.

SRI AUROBINDO

He who would win high spiritual degrees, must pass endless tests and examinations. But most are anxious only to bribe the examiner.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE YOGA OF INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE*

CHAPTER IX

THE RELEASE FROM THE EGO

THE formation of a mental and vital ego tied to the body sense was the first great labour of the cosmic Life in its progressive evolution; for this was the means it found for creating out of matter a conscious individual. The dissolution of this limiting ego is the one condition, the necessary means for this very cosmic Life to arrive at its divine fruition: for only so can the conscious individual find either his transcendent self or his true Person. This double movement is usually represented as a fall and a redemption or a creation and a destruction,—the kindling of a light and its extinction or the formation first of a smaller temporary and unreal self and a release from it into our true self's eternal largeness. For human thought falls apart towards two opposite extremes: one, mundane and pragmatic, regards the fulfilment and satisfaction of the mental, vital and physical ego-sense individual or collective as the object of life and looks no farther, while the other spiritual, philosophic or religious which regards the conquest of the ego in the interests of the soul, spirit or whatever be the ultimate entity, as the one thing supremely worth doing. Even in the camp of the ego there are two divergent attitudes which divide the mundane or materialist theory of the universe. One tendency of this thought regards the mental ego as a creation of our mentality which will be dissolved with the dissolution of mind by the death of the body; the one abiding truth is eternal Nature working in the race—this or another—and her purpose should be followed, not ours. The fulfilment of the race, the collective ego, and not that of the individual should be the rule of life. Another trend of thought, more vitalistic in its tendencies, fixes on the conscious ego as the supreme achievement of Nature, no matter how transitory, ennobles it into a human representative of the Will-to-be and holds up its greatness and satisfaction as the highest aim of our existence. In the more numerous systems that take their stand on some kind of religious

* *Synthesis of Yoga* Chapter XXI (*Arya* Vol. III), revised by Sri Aurobindo.

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thought or spiritual discipline there is a corresponding divergence. The Buddhist denies the existence of a real self or ego, admits no universal or transcendent Being. The Advaitin declares the apparently individual soul to be none other than the supreme Self and Brahman, its individuality an illusion; the putting off of individual existence is the only true release. Other systems assert, in flat contradiction of this view, the eternal persistence of the human soul; a basis of multiple consciousness in the One or else a dependent but still separate entity, it is constant, real, imperishable.

Amidst these various and conflicting opinions the seeker of the Truth has to decide for himself which shall be for him the Knowledge. But if our aim is a spiritual release or a spiritual fulfilment, then the exceeding of this little mould of ego is imperative. In the human egoism and its satisfaction there can be no divine culmination and deliverance. A certain purification from egoism is the condition even of ethical progress and elevation, for social good and perfection; much more is it indispensable for inner peace, purity and joy. But a much more radical deliverance, not only from egoism but from ego-idea and ego-sense, is needed if our aim is to raise human into divine nature. Experience shows that, in proportion as we deliver ourselves from the limiting mental and vital ego, we command a wider life, a larger existence, a higher consciousness, a happier soul-state, even a greater knowledge, power and scope. Even the aim which the most mundane philosophy pursues, the fulfilment, perfection, satisfaction of the individual is best assured not by satisfying the same ego but by finding freedom in a higher and larger self. There is no happiness in smallness of the being, says the Scripture, it is with the large being that happiness comes. The ego is by its nature a smallness of being; it brings contraction of the consciousness and with the contraction limitation of knowledge, disabling ignorance,—confinement and a diminution of power and by that diminution incapacity and weakness—scission of oneness and by that scission disharmony and failure of sympathy and love and understanding,—inhibition or fragmentation of delight of being and by that fragmentation pain and sorrow. To recover what is lost we must break out of the worlds of ego. The ego must either disappear in impersonality or fuse into a larger I: it must fuse in the wider cosmic 'I' which comprehends all these smaller selves or the transcendent of which even the cosmic self is a diminished image.

But this cosmic self is spiritual in essence and in experience; it must not be confused with the collective existence, with any group soul or the life and body of a human society or even of all mankind. The subordination of the

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ego to the progress and happiness of the human race is now a governing idea in the world's thought and ethics; but this is a mental and moral and not a spiritual ideal. For that progress is a series of constant mental, vital and physical vicissitudes, it has no firm spiritual content, and offers no sure standing-ground to the soul of man. The consciousness of collective humanity is only a larger comprehensive edition or a sum of individual egos. Made of the same substance, in the same mould of nature, it has not in it any greater light, any more eternal sense of itself, any purer source of peace, joy and deliverance. It is rather even more tortured, troubled and obscured, certainly more vague, confused and unprogressive. The individual is in this respect greater than the mass and cannot be called on to subordinate his more luminous possibilities to this darker entity. If light, peace, deliverance, a better state of existence are to come, they must descend into the soul from something wider than the individual but also from something higher than the collective ego. Altruism, philanthropy, the service of mankind are in themselves mental or moral ideals, not laws of the spiritual life. If in the spiritual aim there enters the impulse to deny the personal self or to serve humanity or the world at large, it comes not from the ego nor from the collective sense of the race, but from something more occult and profound transcendent of both these things; for it is founded on a sense of the Divine in all and it works not for the sake of ego or the race but for the sake of the Divine and its purpose in the person or group or Man collective. It is this transcendent Source which we must seek and serve, this vaster being and consciousness to which the race and the individual are minor terms of its existence.

There is indeed a truth behind the pragmatic impulse which an exclusive one-sided spirituality is apt to ignore or deny or belittle. It is this that since the individual and the universal are terms of that higher and vaster Being, their fulfilment must have some real place in the supreme Existence. There must be behind them some high purpose in the supreme Wisdom and Knowledge, some eternal strain in the supreme Delight: they cannot have been, they were not, created in vain. But the perfection and satisfaction of humanity like the perfection and satisfaction of the individual, can only be securely compassed and founded upon a more eternal yet unseized truth and right of things. Minor terms of some greater Existence, they can fulfil themselves only when that of which they are the terms is known and possessed. The greatest service to humanity, the surest foundation for its true progress, happiness and perfection is to prepare or find the way by which the individual

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and the collective man can transcend the ego and live in its true self, no longer bound to ignorance, incapacity, disharmony and sorrow. It is by the pursuit of the eternal and not by living bound in the slow collective evolution of Nature that we can best assure even that evolutionary, collective, altruistic aim our modern thought and idealism have set before us. But it is in itself a secondary aim; to find, know and possess the Divine existence, consciousness and nature and to live in it for the Divine is our true aim and the one perfection to which we must aspire.

It is then in the way of the spiritual philosophies and religions, not in that of any earth-bound materialistic doctrine, that the seeker of the highest knowledge has to walk, even if with enriched aims and a more comprehensive spiritual purpose. But how far has he to proceed in the elimination of the ego? In the ancient way of Knowledge we arrive at the elimination of the ego-sense which attaches itself to the body, to the life, to the mind and says of all or any of them, "This is I". Not only do we, as in the way of works, get rid of the "I" of the worker and see the Lord alone as the true source of all works and sanction of works and His executive Nature-power or else His supreme Shakti as the sole agent and worker,—but we get rid also of the ego-sense which mistakes the instruments or the expressions of our being for our true self and spirit. But even if all this has been done, something remains still; there remains a substratum of all these, a general sense of the separate I. This substratum ego is something vague, indefinable, elusive; it does not or need not attach itself to anything in particular as the self; it does not identify itself with anything collective; it is a sort of fundamental form or power of the mind which compels the mental being to feel himself as a perhaps indefinable but still a limited being which is not mind, life or body but under which their activities proceed in Nature. The others were a qualified ego-idea and ego-sense supporting themselves on the play of the Prakriti; but this is the pure fundamental ego-power supporting itself on the consciousness of the mental Purusha. And because it seems to be above or behind the play and not in it, because it does not say "I am the mind, life or body," but "I am a being on whom the action of mind, life and body depends," many think themselves released and mistake this elusive Ego for the One, the Divine, the true Purusha or at the very least for the true Person within them,—mistaking the indefinable for the Infinite. But so long as this fundamental ego-sense remains, there is no absolute release. The egoistic life, even if diminished in force and intensity, can still continue well enough with this support. If there is the error in identification, the ego life may under that

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pretext get rather exaggerated intensity and force. Even if there is no such error, the ego life may be wider, purer, more flexible and release may be now much easier to attain and nearer to accomplishment, but still there is as yet no definitive release. It is imperative to go farther, to get rid of this indefinable but fundamental ego-sense also and get back to the Purusha on whom it is supporting itself; of whom it is a shadow; the shadow has to disappear and by its disappearance reveal the spirit's unclouded substance.

That substance is the self of the man called in European thought the Monad, in Indian philosophy, Jiva or Jivatman, the living entity, the self of the living creature. This Jiva is not the mental ego-sense constructed by the workings of Nature for her temporary purpose. It is not a thing bound, as the mental being, the vital, the physical are bound, by her habits, laws or processes. The Jiva is a spirit and self, superior to Nature. It is true that it consents to her acts, reflects her moods and upholds the triple medium of mind, life and body through which she casts them upon the soul's consciousness; but it is itself a living reflection or a soul-form or a self-creation of the Spirit universal and transcendent. The One Spirit who has mirrored some of His modes of being in the world and in the soul, is multiple in the Jiva. That Spirit is the very Self of ourself, the One and the Highest, the Supreme we have to realise, the infinite existence into which we have to enter. And so far the teachers walk in company, all agreeing that this is the supreme object of knowledge, of works and of devotion, all agreeing that if it is to be attained, the Jiva must release himself from the ego-sense which belongs to the lower Nature or Maya. But here they part company and each goes his own way. The Monist fixes his feet on the path of an exclusive Knowledge and sets for us as sole ideal an entire return, loss, immersion or extinction of the Jiva in the Supreme. The Dualist or the partial Monist turns to the path of Devotion and directs us to shed indeed the lower ego and material life, but to see as the highest destiny of the spirit of man, not the self-annihilation of the Buddhist, not the self-immersion of the Adwaitin, not a swallowing up of the many by the One, but an eternal existence absorbed in the thought, love and enjoyment of the Supreme, the One, the All-Lover.

For the disciple of an integral Yoga there can be no hesitation; as a seeker of knowledge it is the integral knowledge and not anything either half-way and attractive or high-pinnacled and exclusive he must seek. He must soar to the utmost height, but also circle and spread to the most all-embracing wideness, not binding himself to any rigid structure of metaphysical

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thought, but free to admit and contain all the soul's highest and greatest and fullest and most numerous experiences. If the highest height of spiritual experience, the sheer summit of all realisation is the absolute union of the soul with the Transcendent who exceeds the individual and the universe, the widest scope of that union is the discovery of that very Transcendent as the source, support, continent, informing and constituent spirit and substance of both these manifesting powers of the divine Essence and the divine Nature. Whatever the path, this must be for him the goal. The Yoga of Action also is not fulfilled, is not absolute, is not victoriously complete until the seeker has felt and lives in his essential and integral oneness with the Supreme. One he must be with the Divine will in his highest and inmost and in his widest being and consciousness, in work, his will, his power of action, his mind, body, life. Otherwise he is only released from the illusion of individual works, but not released from the illusion of separate being and instrumentality. As the servant and instrument of the Divine, he works, but the crown of his labour and its perfect base or motive is oneness with that which he serves and fulfils. The Yoga of devotion too is complete only when the lover and the Beloved are unified and difference is abolished in the ecstasy of a divine oneness, and yet in the mystery of this unification there is the sole existence of the Beloved but no extinction or absorption of the lover. It is the highest unity which is the express direction of the path of knowledge, the call to absolute oneness is its impulse, the experience of it its magnet: but it is this very highest unity which takes as its field of manifestation in him the largest possible cosmic wideness. Obeying the necessity to withdraw successively from the practical egoism of our triple nature and its fundamental ego-sense, we come to the realisation of the spirit, the self, lord of this individual human manifestation, but our knowledge is not integral if we do not make this self in the individual one with the cosmic spirit and find their greater reality above in an inexpressible but not unknowable Transcendence. That Jiva, possessed of himself, must give himself up into the being of the Divine. The self of the man must be made one with the Self of all; the self of the finite individual must pour itself into the boundless finite and that cosmic spirit must be exceeded in transcendent Infinite.

This cannot be done without an uncompromising abolition of the ego-sense at its very basis and source. In the path of Knowledge one attempts this abolition, negatively by a denial of the reality of the ego, positively by a constant fixing of the thought upon the idea of the One and the In-

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finite in itself or the One and Infinite everywhere. This, if persistently done changes in the end the mental outlook on oneself and the whole world and there is a kind of mental realisation; but afterwards by degrees or perhaps rapidly and imperatively and almost at the beginning the mental realisation deepens into spiritual experience—a realisation in the very substance of our being. More and more frequent conditions come of something indefinable and illimitable, a peace, a silence, a joy, a bliss beyond expression, a sense of absolute impersonal Power, a pure existence, a pure consciousness, an all-pervading Presence. The ego persists in itself or in its habitual movements, but the peace of the one becomes more and more inured, the others are broken, crushed, more and more rejected, becoming weak in their intensity, limp or mechanical in their action. In the end there is a constant giving up of the whole consciousness into the being of the Supreme. In the beginning when the restless confusion and obscuring impurity of our outward nature is active, when the mental, vital, physical ego-sense are still powerful, this new mental outlook, these experiences may be found difficult in the extreme: but once that triple egoism is discouraged or moribund and the instruments of the Spirit are set right and purified, in an entirely pure, silent, clarified, widened consciousness the purity, infinity, stillness of the One reflects itself like the sky in a limpid lake. A meeting or a taking in of the reflected Consciousness by that which reflects it becomes more and more pressing and possible, the bridging or abolition of the atmospheric gulf between that immutable ethereal impersonal vastness and this once mobile whirl or narrow stream of personal existence is no longer an arduous improbability and may be even a frequent experience, if not yet an entirely permanent state. For even before complete purification, if the strings of the egoistic heart and mind are already sufficiently frayed and loosened, the Jiva can by a sudden snapping of the main cords escape, ascending like a bird freed into the spaces or widening like a liberated flood into the One and Infinite. There is first a sudden sense of a cosmic consciousness, a casting of oneself into the universal; from that universality one can aspire more easily, aspire to the Transcendent. There is a pushing back and rending or a rushing down of the walls that imprisoned our conscious being; there is a loss of all sense of individuality and personality, of all placement in Space or Time or action and law of Nature; there is no longer an ego, a person definite and definable, but only consciousness, only existence, only peace and bliss; one becomes immortality, becomes eternity, becomes infinity. All that is left of the personal soul

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is a hymn of peace and freedom and bliss vibrating somewhere in the Eternal.

When there is an insufficient purity in the mental being, the release appears at first to be partial and temporary; the Jiva seems to descend again into the egoistic life and the higher consciousness to be withdrawn from him. In reality, what happens is that a cloud or veil intervenes between the lower nature and the higher consciousness and the Prakriti resumes for a time its old habit of working under the pressure but not always with a knowledge or present memory of that high experience. What works in it then is a ghost of the old ego supporting a mechanical repetition of the old habits upon the remnants of confusion and impurity still left in the system. The cloud intervenes and disappears, the rhythm of ascent and descent renews itself until the impurity has been worked out. This period of alternations may easily be long in the integral Yoga; for there an entire perfection of the system is required; it must be capable at all times and in all conditions and all circumstances, whether of action or inaction, of admitting and then living in the consciousness of the supreme Truth. Nor is it enough for the sadhaka to have the utter realisation only in the trance of Samadhi or in a motionless quietude; but he must in trance or in waking, in passive reflection or energy of action be able to remain in the constant Samadhi of the firmly founded Brahmic consciousness.¹ But if or when our conscious being has become sufficiently pure and clear, then there is a firm station in the higher consciousness. The impersonalised Jiva, one with the universal or possessed by the Transcendent, lives high-seated above² and looks down undisturbed at whatever remnants of the old working of Nature may revisit the system. He cannot be moved by the workings of the three modes of Prakriti in his lower being, nor can he be shaken from his station by the attacks even of grief and suffering. And finally, there being no veil between, the higher peace overpowers the lower disturbance and mobility. There is a settled silence in which the soul can take sovereign possession of itself above and below and altogether.

Such possession is not indeed the aim of the traditional Yoga of knowledge whose object is rather to get away from the above and the below and the all into the indefinable Absolute. But whatever the aim, the path of knowledge must lead to one first result, an absolute quietude; for unless

¹ Gita.

² *Udāsina*, the word for the spiritual "indifference", that is to say the unattached freedom of the soul touched by the supreme knowledge.

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the old action of Nature in us be entirely quieted, it is difficult if not impossible to found either any true soul-status or any divine activity. Our nature acts on a basis of confusion and restless compulsion to action; the Divine acts freely out of a fathomless calm. Into that abyss of tranquility we must plunge and become that, if we are to annul the hold of this lower nature upon the soul. Therefore the universalised Jiva first ascends into the Silence; it becomes vast, tranquil, actionless. What action takes place, whether of body and these organs or any working whatever, the Jiva sees but does not take part in, authorise or in any way associate itself with. There is action, but no personal actor, no bondage, no responsibility. If personal action is needed, then the Jiva has to keep or recover what has been called the form of the ego, a sort of mental image of an "I" that is the knower, devotee, servant or instrument, but an image only and not a reality. If even that is not there, still action can continue by the mere continued force of Prakriti, without any personal actor, without indeed their being any sense of an actor at all; for the Self into which the Jiva has cast its being is the actionless, the fathomless still. The path of works leads to the realisation of the Lord, but here even the Lord is not known; there is only the silent Self and Prakriti doing her works, even, as it seems at first, not with truly living entities but with names and forms existing in the Self but which the Self does not admit as real. The soul may go even beyond this realisation; it may either rise to the Brahman on the other side of all idea of Self as a Void of everything that is here, a Void of unnameable peace and extinction of all, even of the Sat, even of that Existent which is the impersonal basis of individual or universal personality; or else it may unite with it as an ineffable "That" of which nothing can be said; for the universe and all that is does not even exist in That, but appears to the mind as a dream more unsubstantial than any dream ever seen or imagined, so that even the word dream seems too positive a thing to express its entire unreality. These experiences are the foundation of that lofty Illusionism which takes such firm hold of the human mind in its highest overleapings of itself.

These ideas of dream and illusion are simply results in our still existent mentality of the new poise of the Jiva and its denial of the claim made upon it by its old mental associations and view of life and existence. In reality, the Prakriti does not act for itself or by its own motion, but with the Self as lord; for out of that Silence wells all this action, that apparent Void looses out as if into movement all these infinite riches of experiences. To this realisation the sadhak of the integral Yoga must arrive by the process

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that we shall hereafter describe. What then, when he so resumes his hold upon the universe and views no longer himself in the world but the cosmos in himself, will be the position of the Jiva or what will fill in his new consciousness the part of the ego-sense? There will be no ego-sense even if there is a sort of individualisation for the purposes of the play of universal consciousness in an individual mind and frame; and for this reason that all will be unforgettably the One and every Person or Purusha will be to him the One in many forms or rather in many aspects and poises, Brahman, acting upon Brahman, one Nara-Narayana³ everywhere. In that larger play of the Divine the joy of the relations of divine love also is possible without the lapse into the ego-sense,—just as the supreme state of human love likewise is described as the unity of one soul in two bodies. The ego-sense is not indispensable to the world-play in which it is so active and so falsifies the truth of things; the truth is always the One at work on itself, at play with itself, infinite in unity, infinite in multiplicity. When the individualised consciousness rises to and lives in that truth of the cosmic play, then even in full action, even in possession of the lower being the Jiva remains still one with the Lord, and there is no bondage and no delusion. He is in possession of Self and released from the ego.

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³ The Divine, Narayana, making itself one with humanity even as the human, Nara becomes one with the Divine.

SRI AUROBINDO'S MESSAGE TO PHILOSOPHY*

I FEEL on this occasion that I am on a pilgrimage to Baroda. That is what I had said when I had occasion to speak to the Calcutta University in 1952 when the worthy President of this Session was in the chair for two days. Calcutta being the birth-place and the field of Sri Aurobindo's political activity was a place of pilgrimage and so is Baroda. It is here that he spent nearly thirteen years of his life from 1893 to 1905 from the age of 21 to 33. Those were the formative years, and also creative. His poetic genius began to flower, and beginnings of his yogic life and nationalism came to him. The poet, the patriot, the philosopher, the seer in him began to develop here. During that period he taught here at this very college. When I think of him I find a great and silent personality unaustentatiously doing his work solid and mighty work,—for humanity. A retiring personality, reticent almost to the point of shyness, here was a giant intellect, cosmic in its synthetic sweep, keen in penetrating power, quick and firm in its grasp of the essentials. A mighty and loving heart that could sacrifice all on the altar of Truth—as he knew it,—one who had no “Self” left in him almost from his young age. As a professor he was the idol of the students. When he came here from Surat in 1907, after attending the historic Session of the Congress, the students unyoked the horses and drew his carriage to his residence. I still remember how ardent nationalists—young and old—waited impatiently for the fiery issues of the “Bande Mataram” to drink the intoxicating philosophy of nationalism which the paper gave from week to week, from day to day. It was that which gave the intellectual and spiritual background to our political life. People used to go to the Post-office to take the issues of the “Bande Mataram” and clusters used to form round its issues in the street corners and on the roads. Sjt. K. M. Munshi; Mr. Nickte; Mr. C. J. Sutaria; Dadubhai Desai; Sjt. Purani were among his students. It is, therefore, meet that this Philosophical Congress now held at Baroda should remember him and remind the Congress of the contribution that he has given to life and also to philosophy.

* Address delivered on 29-12-1953 at the 28th Session of the Indian Philosophical Congress at Baroda.

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It is his intense sincerity to sacrifice everything for the Truth—that distinguishes him from many other thinkers. The first truth that claimed him was the truth of Indian National Movement, the truth of freedom of the motherland. The second truth that claimed him as his own is the essential divinity of man. Having passed through a long and arduous period of Spiritual development he reiterates it to the present world with convincing logic. It is upon that eternal truth of the essential divinity of man that Indian Culture is based. It is true, that other cultures had sometimes during their growth the same idea but no other culture has created complex systems of metaphysical thought round this essential divinity of man and placed it constantly before itself as a practical objective for the individual and collective life of man throughout its history. A philosophy of humanity, or of man, can only be based upon this great truth of man's essential divinity. Sri Aurobindo shows that the attainment of this essential divinity, which is at present covered up in man, is not only a logical necessity of the process of growth or evolution from apparent inconscience to consciousness, but is an inevitability.

A short sketch of his life would not be out of place here. His father, Dr. K.D. Ghose was an anglicized Indian and wanted all his children to be brought up as Englishmen. He took three of his sons, including Sri Aurobindo, aged seven, to England. Sri Aurobindo remained in Manchester till he was about 11 or 12 and then went to London and joined St. Paul's High School and distinguished himself in the study of languages, particularly Latin and Greek. Life in London was hard as remittances from India had become irregular. He left St Pauls' with a Scholarship and went to Cambridge for his Tripos and continued his studies for the I.C.S., unaided. He passed his Tripos Examination but did not care to take the degree and he did not want to join the I.C.S. and yet he could not tell his father who had been wanting him to join the highest Service under the British in India. So, he absented himself from the riding test—even though he had secured record marks in the Language-group in the written papers. The reason was that he had joined the Indian Majlis at Cambridge, an Association of Indian Students of which Mr. Hari Singh Gaur, K. G. Deshpande and others were members, in which he strongly advocated political freedom for India. Late Sir Sayaji Rao Gaekwar was in London at that time and he took him up in State Service.

He was in Baroda from 1893 to 1906. During these years he studied Indian Culture, increased his knowledge of Indian languages, wrote poetry and political articles in the "Induprakash" of Bombay criticising the moderate

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policy of the Congress of those days. His interest in politics, literature and Yoga was very practical. During his visits to Bengal in vacations he studied the political atmosphere and created revolutionary groups of youngmen in five or six districts of Bengal.

In 1906 he resigned his service of the Baroda State to devote himself entirely to the cause of Indian freedom and national education. Charged with complicity in the famous Alipore Bomb Case he was detained during trial in jail where he resumed his practice of Yoga which was interrupted by the whirlwind of political activity. The "Bande Mataram", edited by him gave to the Nationalist movement in India the intellectual basis which turned the course of political thought and action in India. It was during his temporary detention that he realised the basic truth of Yoga,—the experience of the Omnipresent Reality came to him in jail and he spoke about it in the famous Uttarpara-speech in 1909 when he was acquitted. You can read in his own words the description of his experience. After that his life underwent a radical change. He devoted himself to the working out of the experiences of the Omnipresent Reality in life and gave to mankind a rationale of its destiny in his masterpiece—"The Life Divine".

It was during his stay in Pondicherry from 1914-20 that he conducted a monthly philosophical review called the "Arya". The object of the magazine was to give to mankind a "grand synthesis of human knowledge".

Our president in his address has pleaded for a synthesis today. May I humbly suggest to him and to this Congress that such a synthesis already exists, given by one who had assimilated Western Culture in his young age and later dived deep into the profundities of Eastern Culture? It is not merely in the field of philosophical thought that he has made an epoch-making contribution,—in sociology, in psychology, to International political Unity and in creative arts—in all the important branches of human culture this great Spirit working in his spiritual laboratory has worked out sound principles and laid down lines along which man's problems—individual and collective—could be solved. It is not a small, one-sided thought-structure that he has given, it is not a mere philosophy that he has brought to mankind, it is a spiritual Power which he has made available to man to help him in his upward evolution.

Therefore, I consider it a good sign that Sri Aurobindo's thought and vision is slowly but steadily gaining ground all over the world. His gospel of "Divine Life on Earth for man" promises to become the basis of human philosophy. I have only recently returned from a tour of East and Central

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Africa where I was invited by the Tagore-Gandhi Lecture Trust to speak on Sri Aurobindo. I am glad to state that interest in Sri Aurobindo has been awakened and may abide.

Secondly, many Indian and foreign Universities have included some of his works in their post-graduate studies. It is expected that attention of the philosophic world will turn to the study of his philosophy. Now that Indian Philosophy is coming to its own, is it too much to expect that his works would find a place in all important branches of philosophical studies?

In this respect the U.S.A. are to be congratulated on their snatching the initiative from India. Whereas in no university in India is there a chair for the exclusive study of Sri Aurobindo, at the University of Stanford in California there is already a chair for Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and Dr. Haridas Choudhury of Calcutta is already engaged for two years on that work. The University of Syracuse in America is also taking keen interest in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Is it not time that we in free India stir a little and do the needful to popularise the knowledge of our contemporary Masters amongst our young students?

Another good sign is the fact that four or five theses for the doctorate degree have been successfully attempted based on Sri Aurobindo's works. It clearly shows that Sri Aurobindo's thought-structure offers very fruitful ground for further thought and stimulates original work.

I am glad to find that Sri Aurobindo has come to stay in the field of world-philosophy. Though Sri Aurobindo himself stated that he was not a philosopher, he did affirm that what he had formulated in his writings was his experience of the Reality. That experience, or rather that world of experience, is rationally explicable. In fact, it is not only a logical necessity, but the inevitable culmination of the process of growth from the Inconscient to the supreme, supraconscient Reality. It is the bringing down of that world of spiritual Reality which would solve the pressing problem of the integration of man's personality and its reconstitution and the resolution of conflicts of man's Collective life.

Thus, Sri Aurobindo's whole contribution rests upon the basis that experience is the test of Reality. The basis of all experience is "Consciousness". Consciousness, therefore, is the fundamental fact of existence. This consciousness is capable of enlarging the field of its experience, it is multi-dimensional. This has been shown in some of the contributions to your Congress by Professors. Consciousness is capable of a horizontal extension, an inward expansion, circumconscience and intra-conscience,—of upward

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or vertical ascent, and on each plane it can open out to us a world of experience.

Perhaps I would do well to draw the attention of the philosophers to the special contribution which Sri Aurobindo has made to the world of contemporary thought. In fact, he has not brought mere "thought" to man. A spiritual power, a new and higher level of consciousness, the dynamic Divine Consciousness has been made available to man by him. But this is not the occasion to speak about it.

According to Sri Aurobindo, this Universe is the expression of an Omnipresent Reality. It is a living universe, it is pulsating with consciousness. The universal energy seems to start, to our sense experience and to our intelligence, from an apparent Inconscience. I say "apparent" because if it was real then "Consciousness" could not have grown out of it. 'Being cannot result from "Non-being" "*Na Asato Vidyatē bhāvo*".—Something cannot come out of Nothing. The apparent Inconscience is only a mask, a veil which the Omnipresent Reality has put on. It is That which must have involved in the Inconscient to make this universal existence and evolution possible.

There is the other well-known stand of the materialist who bases everything on Matter. But as Madame, the Vice-Chancellor, pointed out in her welcome address even the scientist who deals exclusively with matter, is today, unable to tell us what matter is.

There is no time to go into the whole of Sri Aurobindo's Vision because it is so vast and cosmic. I shall therefore confine myself to three or four aspects in which he has made unique contribution to thought. First, his interpretation of the process of growth, which is generally known as evolution. Second, his explanation of origin of Ignorance. Third, his contribution to psychology—especially the organisation of the whole human psychology from the sub-conscious to the superconscious. Fourth, his new outlook on logic and fifth, his unique conception of transformation of Nature.

(To continue)

A. B. PURANI

THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE

IN his convocation address at the Patna University, Sardar Panikkar appealed to the students "to have a proper perspective of Indian civilisation." It was a stirring and timely appeal. "It is not the glories of Nalanda," said he, "the mural paintings of Ajanta or the haunting beauty of Tajmahal or even the great literary works or the philosophical systems of the past that exclusively constitute our civilisation. The new civilisation that is developing around us, the new vision which is rising before us should also move us to enthusiasm."

It is, indeed, high time we set about developing the proper perspective and taking stock of the "new vision of India that is rising before us." But what is the proper perspective, and what is the new vision?

I hope Sardar Panikkar will agree with me in holding that every living nation has a soul in it and that its culture is not a mere complex of traits, traditions and habits, but a progressive life-expression of that soul. It was the soul of India that broke out into the spiritual splendour of the Vedic and the Upanishadic times; it was the soul of India that created the magnificent religious, ethical and social structures of the Epic age; it was the soul of India that gave birth to the "glories of Nalanda, the mural paintings of Ajanta" and the great philosophical and literary monuments of the later epochs. That soul is not dead today, nor is it modernised in the sense of being westernised. After a somewhat protracted period of weariness and langour in which the age-old values were clouded and confused, it is rising again to affirm the truth it holds within itself and carry forward its historic mission. To realise this national soul, to enter into union and communion with it, and to receive and work out its inspirations in life, is the only way to promote its cultural self-expression in the world.

In order, then, to have a proper perspective of Indian culture and civilisation, we must go straight to the fundamental and immortal aspiration of its soul. That aspiration is an unquenchable thirst for the Infinite and Eternal. It is not a mere intellectual seeking or philosophical curiosity impelling a handful of men towards spiritual knowledge, but a national aspiration and a collective yearning so beautifully voiced by the high-souled Maitreyi of the Upanishads:

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“येनाहं नामृता स्याम् किमहं तेन कुर्याम्”

(What shall I do with that which will not make me immortal?)

Even in the later ages, when the light of knowledge was obscured and the life-force of the nation seemed to give way under the rude, repeated impacts of alien forces, the ancient aspiration may have burned low in the heart of Indian humanity, but was never extinguished; and it flared up with the very first stirrings of the national awakening. It is significant that the renaissance of India was marked primarily and predominantly by a resurgence of her spirituality, and the patriotic spirit of her people was inspired and nourished by spiritual ideals. Politics, normally a shady game of hypocrisy, duplicity, falsehood and unabashed self-seeking, became a rallying-cry for the cult of Mother worship of which Bankimchandra's Vandemataram was the most impassioned expression. The new age dawned with an intense glow of spiritual idealism and throbbed with an expansive spiritual fervour. And though the first spiritual vision soon faded away and the original inspiration clouded over in the heat and dust of the subsequent struggles, Indian nationalism has always retained something of the first inspiration and been fumbling its way, through whatever awkward moral experiments, to the main springs of Indian spirituality. Even today, behind the fast-moving scenes of the national life, behind the rush and roar of the awakening energies and the tumbling clutter of discarded relics, one can well perceive a slow but steady turning of the national being towards the spiritual splendour which is breaking on its inner horizons and of which Rammohan Roy, Keshavchandra Sen, Dayananda Saraswati, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo have been the illustrious harbingers. When the sun of the new, dynamic spirituality rises in all its glory, India will have not only recovered her spiritual heritage in her galvanised life and culture, but she will enrich it by new gains and achievements and make it perfectly creative in the life of all humanity.

It would, therefore, be a great mistake to think that one can develop the right perspective of Indian culture and civilisation merely by taking a wide and comprehensive view of the overt aims and activities of the nation and the ease and flexibility with which it is absorbing the modern tendencies and influences of the world. An intellectual assessment of Indian culture has often led to misleading, if not grotesque conclusions, in spite of the goodwill and sympathy of its historians and expositors. India owes a deep debt of

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gratitude to European, particularly German, Indologists who have spared no pains to make her philosophy, literature and cultural past known to the world; but it cannot be denied that it is some of these very Indologists and their docile Indian followers who are responsible for the damaging misrepresentations and gross misjudgements which have sprung from their all too intellectual perspective. To take only one or two examples out of a thousand: Expressing his views on the Upanishads, Gough says that "there is little that is spiritual in all this...". Deussen makes the Gita "a late product of the degeneration of the monistic thought of the Upanishads, belonging to a period of transition from theism to realistic atheism."¹ It is not necessary to expose the fantastic fallacies involved in these cocksure judgements...they are so ridiculously patent. They reflect, not upon the learning and integrity of the Indologists, but upon the fundamental wrongness of their approach and perspective. The Western exponents and historians of Indian religion, philosophy and culture embarked upon their work with their logical reason as the sole judge and arbiter of things mystic and spiritual. It was a well-intentioned but illegitimate presumption, for, the human reason, however developed it may be, is constitutionally incapable of apprehending and knowing suprarational or spiritual realities, just as the infra-rational mind of the animal is constitutionally incapable of understanding the working of the human reason. It was a presumption that gave to the world a distorted and false view of most of the ancient religions and philosophies of the world—a mentalised view and version of experiences that belong to the levels of consciousness far beyond the human mind. The ancient seers knew that the human mind cannot realise the Infinite unless it surpasses itself; and that was why they revealed spiritual truths only to the initiates, those who, by a sustained and rigorous practice of self-discipline, had purified their mind, life and body, and thereby acquired the competence (adhikara) to realise spiritual truths. Intellectual development alone was never regarded as a title to spiritual life. Shraddha (faith), tapas (askesis) and brahmacharya (holiness) were enjoined upon as an indispensable precondition to the development of intuition without which no understanding of spiritual truths is ever possible. In the Upanishads one often comes across instances in which the spiritual preceptor puts off the novice, again and again, if need be, with the injunction to practise further tapas in order to be able to apprehend spiritual truths:

¹ Indian Philosophy by Dr. Radhakrishnan

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भूय एव तपसा ब्रह्मचर्येण श्रद्धया संवत्सरं संवत्सय

(Another year do ye dwell in holiness and faith and askesis).

The rationalist mind of the modern man must understand once for all that if it really wants to explore the spiritual truths of existence, the timeless source and essence of what man is and becomes, the meaning and destiny of his life and the laws and principles that govern the world, it has to purify itself and rise to a higher plane of consciousness and into another dimension of being. It can know the Spirit only in the light of the Spirit. And once it stands in that light, it will realise how inept, how pretentiously fanciful, how radically blundering were its dogmatic assertions on spiritual subjects and how pitiful and profound its ignorance of what most vitally concerns man to know in the world. Human standards of values and canons of judgement lose all their validity in the immeasurable domains of the Spirit, which are domains of suprarational realities. It is nothing but childish arrogance on the part of the human reason to presume to pronounce on the truths of Spirit from which, as the Upanishads put it, words return with the mind, unable to attain to It. These truths should be approached, as the ancient seers advised and the spiritual seekers all the world over approach them, with faith and aspiration, humility and holiness and a progressive control over one's desires and attachments—a condition which alone contributes to the development of intuition and an ascent of consciousness.

"The dominant character of the Indian mind which has coloured all its culture and moulded all its thoughts is the spiritual tendency. Spiritual experience is the foundation of India's rich cultural history. It is mysticism, not in the sense of involving the exercise of any mysterious power, but only as insisting on a discipline of human nature, leading to a realisation of the spiritual. While the sacred scriptures of the Hebrews and the Christians are more religious and ethical, those of the Hindus are more spiritual and contemplative. The one fact of life in India is the Eternal Being of God."¹ The fount and central truth of Indian culture is the discovery and experience of the Infinite and Eternal. In spite of the lapses and aberrations, the clogging and cramping of the national life during the long, eventful course of its history, Indian humanity has never sought anything

¹ Indian Philosophy by Dr. Radhakrishnan.

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but God. It has sought Him in the depths of its soul, in the beauty and sublimity of Nature and in the rough and tumble of the world, as well as in the ineffable Beyond. It has sought Him through knowledge and love and consecrated service; and it has endeavoured to cast its whole life in the mould of a sacrament. Where in the whole world has the ideal of a householder's life been pitched so high and such a rigorous demand made upon him to conform to it?

“ब्रह्मनिष्ठो गृहस्थः स्यात् ब्रह्मज्ञानपरायणः, यद् यत् कर्म प्रकुर्वीत तद्ब्रह्मणि समर्पयेत् ।”

(The householder should be devoted to the Brahman and consecrated to a knowledge of It. Each action, each movement of his nature he must offer to the Brahman.)

If “the one fact of life in India is the Eternal Being of God,” and if “spiritual experience is the foundation of India's rich cultural history”, as Dr. Radhakrishnan reminds us—and all truly Indian minds will chime with this view—then it must be admitted that the proper perspective of Indian culture and civilisation, which must needs be a spiritual perspective, can be developed only by a serious pursuit of the spiritual life, the life of sadhana, Yoga. No amount of intellectual breadth and catholicity, no amount of what we call mental enlightenment or moral excellence can ever achieve it. The issue has to be faced squarely, and the central problem of the culture of India, which is also the central problem of every department of Indian life including education, has to be tackled with a perfect combination of insight and foresight—insight into the abiding essence and mission of Indian culture, and foresight of the new possibilities of its development in the future; Is India to progress on the lines laid down by the materialist culture of the West, or on the lines of her own spirit and genius? If India is to conserve and develop her own spirit, she can do it only by intensifying her spiritual aspiration and steeping her whole life in spirituality. But it must be a wide, all-embracing, dynamic spirituality, not afraid of the struggles of life and avid of the seclusion of the cave and the solitude of the forest, but armed with the power to transform human nature and convert the discords of human life into the creative harmony of a life of divine peace and power and plenitude. Purged of all taint of ascetic escapism, it will accept all life, social, political, commercial, military and intellectual,

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in order to illumine it with the light of God and quicken it with God's Force.

Indian culture, I repeat, is essentially a spiritual culture, and the only way to develop the proper perspective of it and make it dynamically great and creative, is to orient the national mind towards an all-inclusive, all-conquering spirituality. A wide, universal spiritual culture, untrammelled by effete orthodoxies and sectarian loyalties—a spiritual culture that seeks nothing but the Divine and His unveiled manifestation and reign upon earth, a spiritual culture that is a synthesis of all the enduring achievements of the past and powerful and plastic enough to meet the challenge of the times—is rising for the redemption of the world. To foster the growth of this spirituality, in oneself and in others; to aspire for union with the Divine; to install Him in individual and collective life as the sovereign Master and Guide; to infuse Matter and the material life with His light and Force, is the supreme call of the soul of India upon all who are devoted to it. Let the intelligentsia of India—for, it is they who still fight shy of spirituality and look down upon it as an outworn obscurantism—go deep into the heart of the nation and try to feel the single aspiration that has kept it alive through all the crises of its chequered life. That aspiration, that yearning has ever been for the Divine, the Infinite and Eternal, the supreme Reality, the omnipresent source, substratum and sustenance of all that exists. In the universal realisation of that aspiration lies the fulfilment of the destiny of India. And the hour has struck for a collective advance towards that realisation.

In the next article I shall deal with what Sardar Panikkar has called the new vision rising before us.

RISHABHCHAND

THE LIFE DIVINE

(A Synopsis)

(Note: The Synopsis of Chapter I written by Sri Aurobindo himself—and reproduced here—has been taken as the model for this attempt to prepare a summary of "The Life Divine", chapter by chapter.)

Volume I

CHAPTER I

THE HUMAN ASPIRATION

Man's highest aspiration has been always a seeking for God, perfection, freedom, an absolute truth and bliss, immortality.

A direct contradiction exists between this aspiration and his present state of mortality, imperfection, bondage to mechanical necessity, ego and animality.

This contradiction between what he is now and what he seeks to be is not a final argument against his aspiration. Contradictions are part of Nature's method; the aspiration may be achievable by individual effort or by an evolutionary progress.

The problems of existence are problems of harmony.

The accordance of an active life-principle with the inanimate Matter containing it is Nature's first evolutionary problem; its complete solution would be immortality in the body.

The accordance of conscious Mind with an unconscious Matter and half-conscious Life is her second evolutionary problem; a direct and perfect instrumentation of knowledge in a living body would be its complete solution.

The accordance of immortal spirit with a mortal mind, life and body is her third and final problem; its complete solution would be the evolution of a divine being and a divine nature.

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As Nature has implanted the impulse to life in Matter, to mind in life, so she has implanted in mind the impulse towards the evolution of what is beyond mind, spiritual, supramental. Each impulse justifies itself by the creation of the necessary organs and faculties.

The animal is a laboratory in which she has worked out man; man may be a laboratory in which she wills to work out the superman, the being of a divine nature.

SRI AUROBINDO

CHAPTER II

THE TWO NEGATIONS (I) THE MATERIALIST DENIAL

A divine life on earth not only demands our recognition of Spirit as the inhabitant of the body, but also the body as a fit material for this divine consummation.

First we have to perceive that Matter is Divine; and secondly that Matter and Spirit are linked by an ascending series,—from Life to Mind, and from Mind to Supermind; and thirdly that all is a Oneness.

The problem for Thought, as well as for Life, is to find the Oneness, without denying either Matter or Spirit. To reach this luminous reconciliation the human mind must proceed partly by objective analysis, but more directly through subjective synthesis, in order to arrive at the ultimate unity of Matter, Life, Mind and Spirit.

Mind's natural way is to test the assertion of each of these terms separately. But the pitfall here is that it eventually comes to rest (for a time at least) at one or other of the extremes,—declaring that either Matter or Spirit is the ultimate Real. Thus an exclusive regard of one results in the negation of the other. This has been the divided condition of man's knowledge in the recent past, where an exclusive materialism has held sway in the West, while a life-negating spiritism dominated the East.

To perceive the real source of identity of Spirit and Matter, mind must either go beyond itself, or widen sufficiently to embrace that Oneness. To reach this comprehensive affirmation must be the combined effort of both East and West.

In the West materialism has been the training ground of the intellect towards a clarity and purity of thought. But the materialist must be prepared to enlarge his experience beyond the range of the senses. With his

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feet firmly planted in the material reality he can extend more firmly and surely to a higher (and even highest) pinnacle of knowledge.

All negations ultimately lead to an apparent Unknowable, the knowledge of which is only attainable by a supreme effort of Consciousness. To see Life-in-itself beyond the knowledge of Matter, Mind-in-itself and Supermind-in-itself, not limited by the materialistic formula, are the steps of a higher Knowledge. And Science is opening the gateway to it.

All possible knowledge is knowledge within the power of humanity. All knowledge is rooted in Oneness, because Existence itself has its origin in Oneness, and similarly all forms of Energy—whether Mind, Life or Matter—are one.

The Oneness is the All, and the oneness is in All. It is inwardly the God in man, and outwardly the multitudinous Unity; and both are aspects of the supreme Divine. Ultimately the inner must widen to embrace the outer, in order to realise that greater Oneness of Cosmos.

CHAPTER III

THE TWO NEGATIONS. (2) THE REFUSAL OF THE ASCETIC.

Yet there is a greater all-embracing Oneness beyond the cosmic Unity. This is the pure Transcendent Spirit.

The subtle senses are but channels open to man for gaining contact with the supraphysical realities, the worlds beyond the material universe. But the worlds themselves are only forms, the senses only instruments: Consciousness is the great underlying factor, the universal witness. For the universe has no independent reality, but exists in and for the Consciousness that observes.

Materialism is based on an ultimate unreality of life, and likewise spiritual monism leads to the unreality and purposelessness of human existence. The dilemma can only be solved by an extension of our field of consciousness, an inner enlargement from the individual into the cosmic existence, our attaining the Cosmic Consciousness itself.

Entering into the Cosmic consciousness we become aware of Matter, Life and Mind as strands of one existence, and further of Supermind as the key to all lesser activities. In that higher experience we perceive that the world is a Conscious Energy, and that this Energy is one with the Being that creates it. Yet this conscious Being is more than the universe, and lives independently in its own inexpressible infinity, as well as in the cosmic

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harmonies. We can enter into this world-transcending Consciousness, and become superior to all cosmic existence.

This is the transcendent Silence, the inactive Brahman of the Vedantic Monists. But what relation has that vaster Beyond to this universe? The ancient Indian Upanishads perceived the highest Truth, the true Oneness of that Transcendent Beyond with Cosmic existence. It was later that Indian thought saw only that Beyond as the sole Reality, and hence Cosmos as an illusion. Thus arose in Eastern thought the refusal of the ascetic, the recoil from matter, and the quest for Nirvana, the call of the Spirit, as the ultimate goal of worldly life

CHAPTER IV

REALITY OMNIPRESENT

It is only by achieving the most intimate oneness of the inner life of the individual with his outer existence, that one can realise the truth of Spirit and at the same time accept Matter as well as Life and Thought, as the condition of Spirit's manifestation.

In the Cosmic Consciousness we find a meeting-place where Matter becomes real to Spirit, and Spirit becomes real to Matter. And likewise the intermediaries of Life and Mind become continuous links of one Reality. Matter here reveals itself as the body of Spirit, and Spirit, or soul, as the essence of Matter; and Mind and Life are discovered to be the figures and instruments of the supreme Conscious Being. Mind thence fulfills itself when it becomes a mirror of the Truth of Being, and Life when it consciously lends its energies to the perfect self-figuration of the Divine in the universal existence.

In the Transcendent Consciousness, which is the basis of Existence, we can ultimately realise also the reconciliation of Spirit and Matter. Cosmos and That which transcends Cosmos are but two aspects of the One. The Transcendence is the eternal passivity which makes possible the perfect freedom and omnipotence of an eternal divine activity in innumerable cosmic systems.

The basis and support of man's action likewise must be the realisation of that calm passivity within himself. And on that basis a wider comprehensive consciousness must embrace both the Silence and the world existence.

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When we speak of Non-Being we do not mean a Nothingness or Nihil as the ultimate goal. This term in itself is an indication of an indefinable Something that is beyond Time, and existence in Time. Pure Being is the affirmation by the Unknowable of Itself as the free base of all cosmic existence. And we call Non-Being the contrary affirmation of Its freedom from all cosmic existence. To the awakened human soul both are the same Reality; for the completely conscious soul reaches back to the absolute freedom of the Non-Being without losing its hold on Existence and the universe.

An omnipresent Reality—here and beyond—is the truth of the Supreme, Who is the All. The highest experience of this Reality, in and beyond the universe, shows it to be a conscious Existence, a supreme Intelligence and Force, and a self-existent Bliss. This Truth must be the basis—first in faith, and then experience—of our higher ascent into Knowledge.

CHAPTER V

THE DESTINY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The Supreme Reality is One and Omnipresent. It is a Unity that cannot be conceived by mind, except through an infinite series of conceptions and experiences, and not through one exclusive aspect. For what the mind calls the Unknowable, appears in many forms of Consciousness.

The ancient Vedantic Seers not only saw the positive aspect of infinite Being or Sat, but also the ineffable Beyond or Asat (translated as Non-Being). The Upanishads beheld that Sat and Asat are the highest dual conception, by mind, of a Reality that is One. From this original division of the One has arisen the creation of the Many or the Multiplicity. It was only later thought that erred from the Upanishadic vision, in attempting to seek the purity of the One by denying the complexity of the Many.

A widening conception of the cosmic Reality in modern thought leads us to see that there is an ascending movement in Creation, through which Matter is passing into Life, and Life into mental consciousness. It is this mental consciousness, through man, where lies the possibility of a higher consciousness becoming manifest in Matter, Life and Mind. It is an integral development; for we do not renounce physical life in reaching the mental life, nor do we reject the mental and physical in our attraction for the spiritual.

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This integral development demands also our correct view of Life and the relation between the three forms of consciousness,—the individual, the universal, and the transcendent or supra-cosmic. From this point of view, the individual is one concentrated centre of the universal consciousness, just as the universe is a form inhabited by the immanence of the Formless.

The continuation or survival of the illumined individual is necessary in the action of the world; for the conscious manifestation of the Transcendent (that which Beyond), in the individual is the means by which the collectivity or universality becomes conscious of itself.

First we have to see that the Transcendent is absolute and free in Itself, beyond Time and Space and beyond the polarities of finite and infinite. Yet the Supracosmic is not limited by this transcendence, but has objectivised itself into the multiplicity of forms in Cosmos. There it has established the three conditions of the subconscious, the conscient and the superconscient, in an upward ascending series starting with a subconscious unity. The conscient,—the middle stage,—is centralised in the individual ego, which hence represents man's present imperfect individualised personality.

The transcendence of the ego-consciousness brings about the liberation of the individual soul. The liberated soul may be regarded as a point of light which attracts and instigates other soul awakenings in the world. It is by the individual's ascent to Divine Knowledge, and at the same time his extension into the multiplicity that he becomes a luminous centre of the Divine in humanity.

(To continue)

NATHANIEL PEARSON

THE HUMAN CYCLE

(*An Abridgement*)

CHAPTER IV

THE DISCOVERY OF THE NATION-SOUL

THE primal law and purpose of the individual life, as of society, is to seek its own development, with only this difference that the group-soul is more complex. Its first definite self-consciousness is objective much more than subjective—as the ordinary emotional conception of the nation which centres round its geographical aspect shows—and so far as it is subjective it is apt to be superficial and vague. It is the objective view of society that has been prominent almost everywhere, and history has been the record of the operations and influences of political and economic motives. Religion, if anything, ought to be subjective, yet religious history has been almost entirely, except in the time of the founders and their immediate successors, an insistence on things objective, rites, ceremonies, authority, dogma, forms of belief. But now we have the new psychological tendency of the communal consciousness. This though at first mostly confined to political consciousness and in nations struggling under subjection and defeat, may be taken as the sign and precursor of a general change in humanity. The right “to be ourselves” is established, in spite of the repetition of the Teutonic lapse of living solely for and to oneself. Germany preparing for the subjective stage had a vision unfortunately intellectual than illuminated. The last result—the war, the collapse, the reaction towards the Nazi state—may look discouraging, a clear warning to abandon that path. But the misuse of great powers is no argument against their right use. We have all to do the same thing which Germany has attempted, but to take care not to do it likewise, mistaking the vital ego for Self. For there is a false as well as a true subjectivism, the distinction must be clearly grasped if the road of this stage of social evolution is to be made safe for the human race.

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CHAPTER V

TRUE AND FALSE SUBJECTIVISM

The subjective stage of human development is a step towards self-knowledge and towards living in and from the self. Everything depends on how that step is taken. A psychical self-knowledge tells us that there are in our being many frontal, apparent selves and only one that is entirely secret and real; to rest in the apparent and to mistake it for the real is the one general error, root of all others. If we look at the new attempts of nations, and especially of the subjective German nationality, we shall see the starting-point of these possible errors. The first danger arises from the fact of the subjective age arising out of the individualistic: there is no gain if we only repeat the old errors in new terms, substitute communal egoism for individualistic egoism. For this is what a true subjectivism teaches us—both with regard to the individual and the nation—first, that we are a higher self than our ego, secondly, that we are in our life and being not only ourselves but all others. From this first error of German subjectivism followed others: the subjection of the individual to the nation, rather the State. And since in relation to other States, the effective law is still that of war, war then is the whole business of the State. Finally, since the survival of the best is the highest good, the conquest of the world by German culture is the straight path of human progress. This is, however, not to suggest that all Germany thought in this fashion, what Germany has done is to systematise certain strong actual tendencies and principles present in all 'civilized' countries of the West. From our point of view it is well that terrible examples of the utmost logic of these should have been forced on the attention of mankind, for the choice of good and evil instead of a halting between the two will be forced on the human conscience. The whole root of the German error lies in its mistaking life and body for the Self, while the true individuality of man and nation lies in a Self one in difference which relates the good of each, on a footing of equality and not of strife and domination, to the good of the rest of the world.

CHAPTER VI

THE OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE VIEWS OF LIFE

The principle of individualism is the liberty of the human being as well as in the nation to manage its affairs freely, or if it wills, to mismanage them

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freely so long as it does not interfere with the rights and liberties of others. In both eventualities social and international laws act as checks. Modern Science has meanwhile created new ideas and tendencies, on one side exaggerated individualism, on the other the quite-opposite ideal of collectivism. But behind this conflict there is striving to arise a new idea of human universalism or collectivism for the race. Subjectivism does not, at first sight, seem to make any difference in the picture. For both subjectivism and objectivism start from the same data: though objectivism proceeding by the analytical reason takes an external and mechanical view of the problem while subjectivism proceeds from within and regards everything from the point of view of a containing and developing self-consciousness. But as objective Science sees a universal force of Nature, we may come subjectively to the realisation of a universal Being or Existence which fulfils itself in the world and the individual and the groups with an impartial regard for all as equal powers of its self-manifestation. This is obviously the self-knowledge which is most likely to be right: in this view neither the separate growth of the individual nor the all-absorbing growth of the group can be the ideal, but an equal, simultaneous and as far as may be, parallel development of both, in which each helps to fulfil the other. The subjective search for the self may lean to identification with the conscious physical life, with the vital being, as happened recently. Beyond it we may get to a subjective idealism. But here also it is possible for subjectivism to go still beyond and discover the true Self as something greater even than the mind. Mind, life and body then become merely an instrument for the increasing expression of this Self in the world, the secret Godhead who is one and yet various in all of us, in every being and existence, thing and creature.

CHAPTER VII

THE IDEAL LAW OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The subjective periods of human development are the most fruitful and creative because they make clear to us not only what man has become in the past but what he might be in the future. Existence is an illimitable Reality expressing itself in the multiple values of life. Life begins with matter, and is fixed in type, as it develops there is an increase in the power of variation. Man's individuality is his distinction, by this he understands the law of his being and development and in the end to go beyond himself.

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To do this is the destiny of man and the object of his individual and social existence. This is done primarily through the individual man; for this end man has become an individual soul, that the One may find and manifest Himself in each human being. The object of all society should be, therefore, first to provide conditions of life and growth for individual Man, for all men; secondly, to express in the general life of mankind the power, joy and beauty of the Spirit that has been attained. Freedom and harmony express the two necessary principles of variation and oneness, conditions of healthy progression and successful arrival. The individual will arrive at his possible perfection by a growth from within. It cannot be done brutally, heavily, mechanically. The liberty claimed by the human mind for the individual is no mere egoistic challenge and revolt, it is the primary condition for its self-unfoldment. But individual man belongs not only to humanity, but also to his race type, class type, his mental, vital, physical, spiritual type in which he resembles some, differs from others. It is by working through his group that he enriches his society, that is, the nation. The community stands as a mid-term between the individual and humanity, and it has, like the individual, the right to be itself as against any attempt at domination, uniformity or regimentation. This does not mean that it will refuse contact and interchange with the rest of the world.

Thus the law for the individual is to perfect his individuality by free development from within, but to respect and be aided by the same free development in others. It is the same with the community or the nation, working towards the day when mankind may be really and not only ideally one divine family. Naturally, this is an ideal law which the imperfect race has never attained. Still it is the very business of a subjective age to hold it before him and find out gradually the way by which it can become more and more the moulding principle of his individual and social existence.

(To continue)

SISIR KUMAR GHOSE

REVIEW

The Bhagavad Gita and the Changing World. By P. Nagaraja Rao M.A., D. Litt. Sri Ramakrishna Seva Samiti, Ahmedabad. Price Rs. 5/-only.

The ideal of a spiritual divine life on the earth is neither impracticable nor even such a distant dream as some people imagine. Sri Aurobindo uttered these prophetic words in the last chapter added as a sort of postscript to his great book, *The Life Divine*, which had first appeared in the *Arya* during the great crisis of the modern world, the first World War: "What is necessary is that there should be a turn in humanity felt by some or many towards the vision of this change, a feeling of its imperative need, the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible in themselves and to find the way. That trend is not absent and it must increase with the tension of the crisis in human world-destiny; the need of an escape or a solution, the feeling that there is no other solution than the spiritual cannot but grow and become more imperative under the urgency of critical circumstance. To that call in the being there must always be some answer in the Divine Reality and in Nature." That tension has increased immensely and the book under review is one of many signs of the trend envisaged by Sri Aurobindo. The very title of the book is poignantly significant. If human civilisation is to survive, there must be some sort of unification of the human race eliminating world-shaking upheavals, and that unification requires a spiritual basis, a spiritual view of life which all mankind can accept. The author asserts that the Gita does supply such a basis and he calls it, *The World Scripture*. To establish this claim he has quoted the opinions of many eminent people, ancient and modern from all over the world. Thus he says: "The greatness and the efficacy of the Gita is mentioned in some of the Puranas like Varaha, Skanda and Padma. In Bana's *Kadambari* (seventh century) men attained great happiness by the recitation of the Gita. In Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* it is recorded that King Avantivarman had the Gita read to him in his last hours The Gita form has great fascination for the minds of men. Buddhists and Jains are influenced by the Gita. From Alburni's *Indica* where the Gita is quoted about twenty times we gather that this muslim writer was fascinated by the Gita and perhaps it was he who first introduced it to the muslim world. Later Abul Fazl and Faizi rendered it into prose and verse in Persian."

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The Gita is the first Sanskrit work to be translated into English (1785). Coming to modern writers he quotes Aldous Huxley, the European neo-Brahmin as saying "that the Gita is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of perennial philosophy ever to have been made. Hence, its enduring value, not only for Indians but for all mankind." Adapting the words of Whitehead, the author declares that most of the religious scriptures of the world are a series of footnotes to the Gita. He could have added that the Gita is not only appreciated everywhere, it is actually helping people to remould themselves in the modern world. Thus in a book recently published, *Germany Reborn*, Sj. Chamanlal writes: "They (the Germans) are not much worried about war, because they practically believe in the Gita which we Hindus only read but do not practise. The Gita says life is immortal and our job is not to worry about life and death but to do our duty and leave the results in the hands of God. The Germans are following this philosophy today. They are working hard and very hard."

In the opening chapter of the book, the author gives a graphic description of the plight of the modern man. The Irish Poet W. B. Yeats, aptly describes the contemporary mood:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold,
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned,
The best lack all conviction, the worst are full of passionate intensity.

This intellectual confusion has resulted in tragic consequences. The average man loses his faith in any set ideal or creed. Creedless life knows no code of conduct except that of self-expression which, to use the phrase of Arnold, is 'doing as we please,' a characteristic of the barbarian. The prevailing temper of the world is described vividly by T. S. Eliot in his *Waste Land*. A mere superficial type of intellectual life results in cynicism. Cynicism is an intellectual creed which finds excuse for doing nothing, and contemplating all creeds, adhering to none. This description of the modern plight is true enough, but the book does not show how it has come and, what is more important, how it can be remedied. It of course declares the Gita as the saving light, but this claim, as we shall soon see, has not been well established. Towards the end of the 18th century the modern world was losing faith in religion, all sorts of tyranny and superstition were supported in the name

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of religion and it really stood in the way of human progress. The rise of modern science helped the anti-religious tendency. But people found a new creed to support them—the religion of humanity. “The fundamental idea is that mankind is the godhead to be worshipped and served by man and that the respect, the service, the progress of the human being and human life are the chief duty and chief aim of the human spirit.” “Humanitarianism has been its most prominent emotional result. Philanthropy, social service and other kindred activities have been its outward expression of good works. Democracy, socialism, pacifism are to a great extent its by-products or at least owe much of their vigour to its inner presence.” (The Ideal of Human Unity). This religion of humanity brought forward by the rationalists of the 18th century as a substitute for the formal spiritualism of ecclesiastical Christianity exercised a great influence and ameliorated the condition of mankind to such an extent that it seemed that in course of time it would remove all human ills and bring about an ideal order of society. But the first world war shattered all these hopes, the unparalleled massacre continued for years made men lose faith in all standards and values. Why could not the religion of humanity prevent this asuric carnage? Sri Aurobindo discussed this very question in the last year of the war and gave the answer for all time. “In order to accomplish all its future this idea and religion of humanity has to make itself more explicit, insistent and categorically imperative. For otherwise it can only work with clarity in the minds of the few and with the mass it will be only a modifying influence, but will not be the rule of human life. And so long as that is so, it cannot entirely prevail over its own principal enemy. That enemy, the enemy of all real religion, is human egoism, the egoism of the individual, the egoism of class and nation. These it could for a time soften, modify, force to curb their own arrogant, open and more brutal expressions, oblige to adopt better institutions; but not to give place to the love of mankind, not to recognise a real unity between man and man. For that essentially must be the aim of the religion of humanity, as it must be the earthly aim of all human religion, love, mutual recognition of human brotherhood, a living sense of human oneness and practice of human oneness in thought, feeling and life, the ideal which was expressed first some thousands of years ago in the ancient Vedic hymn and must always remain the highest injunction of the Spirit within us to human life upon earth.” It is this eternal message of the Spirit which is the central teaching of the Gita¹ and it has put it in such a way as to bring it home to

¹ The message of the Gita is the gospel of the Divinity in man—Sri Aurobindo.

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the modern mind; that is the real claim of the Gita to be the universal Scripture, and not because it gives nice moral rules as our author asserts. A moral code, however high, gives only certain external rules of conduct. Humanity has lost faith in these rules, so if the Gita cannot give us anything more than that, the modern world has no use of it. But morality has only a secondary place in the Gita, as indeed in all Yoga Shastra. The real aim is to find the Spirit within and to live and act always in direct union with it. The Gita sums up all this in one sloka: "The Yogin who has taken his stand upon oneness and loves Me in all beings, however and in all ways he lives and acts, lives and acts in Me." (6-31). A religion of humanity based on this spiritual realisation is the hope of the future of mankind.

Two things are standing in the way of the acceptance of this fundamental spiritual truth, Marxism and Psycho-analysis, which often act together. Physical science, from which these two things originated, is no longer anti-religious or anti-spiritual. Science in the twentieth century admits that it has no means of testing spiritual truths and therefore cannot pass any judgment on them, while many eminent scientists personally admit that a spiritual view of the world as distinguished from the material is the most acceptable to the highest human reason. Sir Arthur Eddington, says our author, clinches the issue when he argues: "What is the truth about ourselves? We may incline to various answers. We are a bit of a star gone wrong. We are complicated physical machinery-puppets that strut and talk and laugh and die as the hand of time turns the handle beneath. But, let us remember that there is one elementary inseparable answer. We are *that which asks the questions*." Thus consciousness is the ultimate truth and not matter, and the physical forces are only modes and ways in which that consciousness takes cognisance of the world. Lord Kelvin writes, "We are absolutely forced by science to admit and to believe with absolute confidence in a directive power—in an influence other than physical, dynamical and electrical forces." Marx and Engels also admitted that the spiritual view of the world cannot be refuted by reasoning; but as it is practically found that a belief in a God and religion is detrimental to the well-being of mankind and that a rejection of it paves the way to that well-being, a materialistic view must be accepted. Marx ignores the boons which religion has conferred on humanity; indeed religion has inspired all the higher tendencies of men and raised man above the level of animals; civilisation and culture have their roots in religion. The criticism of religion refers to the abuse and degeneration of religion; all good things in the world have been abused as

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men are still living in egoistic ignorance. The Gita refers to such periodical decline in the condition of religion and declares that God incarnates Himself in all crises to restore religion to its purity so that it may lead humanity to its destined goal on the earth, *lokāśaṅgrahāya*. It also points out the causes of this deterioration and shows the remedy. The root cause of all deformation of religion is the egoism of man, and the Gita gives a practical discipline how we can get rid of egoism and be established in the truth of the Spirit. On the practical side Marxism has this truth that the physical and vital needs of man must be satisfied; but its radical defect is that it lays all its emphasis on this aspect of human life only, disregarding the soul, which is the very essence of man. Professor Rao describes in detail all the current secular ideologies. He quotes from Lenin's book on religion that "all contemporary religion and churches, and every kind of religious organisation, are organs of bourgeois reaction, serving as a defence of exploitation and a doping of the working class." He quotes from the Communist Manifesto to give an exposition of the 'celebrated' doctrine of the *materialist interpretation* of history. He concludes, "Marxism is the boldest expression of man's need for pleasure and happiness on earth." He has given the views of psycho-analysts in some detail. Thus he says: "The psycho-analysts regard religion as dogma which is not true to facts. They attack religion on two grounds. The first line of attack is scientific and methodological and the second is from the point of utility and the bad effect religion produces. Freud observes that the dogmas of religion have no basis at all. He writes, 'if we ask on what their claim to be believed is based, we receive three answers which accord remarkably ill with one another. They deserve to be believed, because our primal ancestors believed them; secondly, because we possess proofs which have been handed down from the period of antiquity; and thirdly, because it is forbidden to raise the question of their authenticity at all.... In other words, religious doctrines are 'illusions'; they do not admit of proof and no one can be compelled to consider them as true or to believe in them.'" (*The Future of an Illusion*). It is a pity that our author leaves Freud here without giving him a crushing reply. Freud has chosen some ignorant and weak defences of religion to show his psycho-analytic might. Religious truths admit as much of proof as any scientific truth and an ultra-rationalist like Narendra (Vivekananda) was actually compelled by Ramakrishna to admit the existence of God. And what does the author of Psychoanalysis give us as a substitute for the religious illusion? His analysis led him to the conclusion that life was nothing but "a round-

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about way to death". In what way is this gloomy view going to help mankind? Indeed it is psycho-analysis which has greatly exaggerated the feeling of frustration in the modern world. The author himself says: Dr. Jung, after immense clinical experience for over a period of thirty years and of many hundreds of patients observes: "Among those in the second half of life—that is over thirty-five, there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. When the modern physician is confronted with a neurotic patient he sees only too clearly why his patient is ill; it arises from his having no love but only sexuality, no faith because he is afraid to grope in the dark; no hope because he is disillusioned by the world and by life; and no understanding because he has failed to read the meaning of his own existence. What the patient needs is *faith, hope, love* and *insight*". We have only to add that this graphic description of a neurotic patient applies to the modern *secular* man, and the remedy can be found only in a spiritual view of life which psychoanalysis cannot provide. "I find it difficult," says Sri Aurobindo, "to take these psychoanalysts at all seriously when they try to scrutinise spiritual experiences by the flicker of their torch-lights,—yet perhaps one ought to, for half-knowledge is a powerful thing and can be a great obstacle to the coming in front of the true Truth. This new psychology looks to me very much like children learning some summary and not very adequate alphabet, exulting in putting their a-b-c-d of the subconscious and the mysterious underground super-ego together and imagining that their first book of obscure beginnings (c-a-t cat, t-r-e-e tree) is the very heart of real knowledge. They look from down up and explain the higher lights with the lower obscurities; but the foundation of these things is above and not below, *upari budhna esham*. The superconscient, not the subconscious, is the true foundation of things. The significance of the lotus is not to be found by analysing the secrets of the mud from which it grows here; its secret is to be found in the heavenly archetype of the lotus that blooms for ever in the light above. The self-chosen field of these psychologists is beside poor, dark and limited; you must know the whole before you can know the part and the highest before you can truly understand the lowest. That is the promise of the greater psychology awaiting its hour before which these poor gropings will disappear and come to nothing."

About one-third of the book is devoted to an exposition of the secular ideologies, and though the express purpose of the author is to uphold the spiritual view, his presentation of the former is much more clear and forceful

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than that of the latter. It is obvious that though he has become somehow inclined to the spiritual ideal he has still a soft corner in his heart for the secular ideologies. He says: "The Gita is opposed to all the secular creeds of our times. It believes in the existence of God as the Creator of the world, in the freedom of man, and the immortality of the soul. The first assumption and the chief tenet of the Gita is the belief in the insufficiency of the human power and human intellect." In support of this latter assumption the author quotes Newton in the footnote. As a matter of fact, the Gita does not stand on "beliefs" and "assumptions", it is based on the highest spiritual realisation and needs no support from modern science or philosophy. Otherwise it would have been only one of the many ideologies current in the modern world and nothing more. Also it does not pit itself against the current secular creeds which indeed were not known at the time of the Gita. But the Gita in a way anticipated these modern creeds, accepted and put in their proper place the elements of truth that there are in each of them, and it is in this that the claim of the Gita to be a universal scripture consists. The author's bias towards secular ideologies becomes quite apparent from the following forceful presentation: "The naturalist philosophers believe that all the difficulties of man are the result of his sophisticated intellect and his interference with the flow of nature and its workings. They plead for a natural and instinctive life and exhort man to live in the light of nature and not according to the dictates of authoritarian creeds. They hold that we can have a sound and natural life only with the disappearance of Gods. Llewelyn Powys in his delightful book *Glory of Life* gives an account of the naturalist creed. He writes: 'the twilight of God is upon us. Its strange ecliptic light is spreading far and wide. We are not today gulled by the creaking of a chamber door or by the thunders out of heaven. Men of science have examined the substance of matter with great precision. Our world is held tight in the clutches of calculable laws as the girders of a bridge'. Powys argues that nature knows and moves in ignorance of our babbling of good and evil. Nature thinks nothing about our chastity....It is sorry providence to turn aside from such felicities when opportunity offers. A man's life's capital is invested in his body." Indeed a great majority of the educated section in our country leans towards secularism. In this connection Professor Rao quotes the views of our Prime Minister. He continues: "Both the materialist and the humanist are alike anti-religious and they do not believe that life has any other goal than beautiful and natural living in social harmony. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

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sums up the creed, 'essentially I am interested in this world, in this life, not in some other world or a future life. Whether there is such a thing as a soul, or whether there is a survival after death or not, I do not know, and, important as these questions are, they do not trouble me in the least. They are just intellectual speculations in an unknown region about which we know next to nothing. They do not affect my life, and whether they were proved right or wrong subsequently, they would make little difference to me.' (*The Discovery of India*). In holding such views, Jawaharlal shows that he is a true representative of a large section of our educated community who have the western outlook. Professor Rao could have quoted also the view of Acharya Vinoba Bhave. In a statement issued in connection with the recent assault on him by the temple priests of Deoghar, he says that the Government should take up the management of such temples and declares: "This is an age of Science. Every faith is being tested on the touchstone of reason. If our society keeps this in view and believes accordingly, everything will go well." Our author also gives this high place to reason, but he is not correct in saying that this is the view of the Gita; if faith has to be tested by reason there will be no faith in the world. Faith is a reflection of the light of our inner being, our soul; it should not be made to stand before the bar of Reason which is an instrument of ignorance and not of knowledge. The Gita says: "Enveloped is knowledge, O Kaunteya, by this eternal enemy of knowledge in the form of desire which is an insatiable fire. The sense, mind and intellect are its seat; enveloping knowledge by these it bewilders the embodied soul." And yet, says Sri Aurobindo, it is within this sense, mind and intellect, this play of the lower nature that you would limit your search for perfection! The effort is vain. In this connection, it would be relevant to quote what Sri Aurobindo said about leadership in India: "There must rise a Party in India who will have to hear the message of the Gita given by the charioteer of Partha. The leaders of India must be followers of the Gita. They will have to rise above the *Gunas*, *gunatita*; only then will come the salvation of India."

The author does not seem to have a clear understanding of the central teaching of the Gita. In one place he says that Karmayoga is the central teaching of the Gita, in another place he says, it is devotion; in another place he declares that the Gita gives three distinct paths, work, devotion, knowledge; yet in another place he says that the Gita makes a synthesis of all three, but does not explain what that synthesis is. The author has collected quotations from different parts of the Gita and arranged them in his own

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way side by side with innumerable quotations from western writers, ancient and modern. This is altogether a wrong way of approach, as the Gita moves in a plane higher than the ordinary human reason, and unfolds its teaching considering the different stages of development of the disciple; and what is suitable in one stage is not so in another. The Gita covers the whole ground of spiritual experience and spiritual disciplines and paths and puts each in its proper place. The Gita is not at all a book of other-worldliness and asceticism, the common modern charge against spirituality in general. It agrees with the psycho-analysts in holding the view that it is no use repressing nature. All existences, it says, follow their nature and what will coercing it avail? (3/33). It does not reject the claims of the body and the senses. The Gita, no doubt, teaches self-control and asks us to abjure sin, but shows that even what we call sin and evil has some truth in it which has been deformed, everything in this world, even our desires and passions, have a divine origin. "As for the subjective becomings, *bhava*, of Nature, which are sattvic, rajasik and tamasic, they are verily from me," says the Lord. (7-12). What is necessary is to purify and transform them and develop the true divine movement; this ideal of a divine life in this body and on the earth is the message of the Gita, for which the Gita gives a practical discipline making a grand synthesis of all Aryan spiritual culture. The author regards the Gita as a religious philosophy, but in fact the Gita is not a book on religion, nor is it mainly a philosophy. Religion is a thing of creed and dogma, and there are many such religions in the world; the Gita accepts the value of all of them as a means of turning the mind of man towards God; but that is only a preliminary discipline as is morality, both of which are constructions of the mind and do not take us very far. The Gita does not regard the distinction of good and evil as something absolute and does not recognise any categorical imperatives or absolute moral laws. The Gita says clearly that a Yogin goes beyond both good and evil, *ubhe sukrite dushkrite*; that does not mean that a yogin freely commits sins; he rises to a higher nature where he has not to live and act according to mental rules or laws, but whatever he does rises spontaneously from a divine nature and is intrinsically true and beautiful. The Gita shows the practical way how to achieve this perfection; thus it is primarily a book of Yoga and Yoga is nothing but practical psychology. As a basis of this spiritual practice, it gives a brief philosophy based on the Upanishads, the original Vedanta, in the framework of which it makes a unique synthesis of all philosophical views. The Gita does not rely on authority, it even says that a man of knowledge goes beyond all the *Vedas*; it

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also does not resort to reasoning to establish its truths. But these are real and supreme truths and the Gita puts them in such a way that the human intellect can easily accept them¹ and make them the basis of sadhana by which one will find within himself the final proof and evidence of these truths. But for that a proper exposition of the Gita is necessary suitable to the modern mind and that is what we find preeminently in Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*.

The author concludes his exposition of the Gita with the following lines about The Ideal Man of the Gita: "He is up against all that is selfish and anti-social and unregenerate. He does not accept any practice however ancient it may be if it goes against the deliverances of the primary maxims of morality and the convictions of the enlightened social conscience of the day. He is with the progressive section of thought, provided it is not anti-spiritual. He combines in himself faith and enthusiasm for the spiritual life." This is an apt description of the author himself, but too far from the ideal man of the Gita. Here the author gives faithfully what the modern western people generally mean when they speak of spirituality,—it is morality and social conscience. To the Gita all moral rules and social ideals, however helpful at a certain stage, are a bondage which the spiritual seeker must abandon, *sarvadharmān parityajya*. As an introduction to this teaching, the Gita starts with the bankruptcy of Arjuna who was a highly social and moral man. The social conscience is a very elastic thing and differs in different ages and countries. According to the enlightened social conscience of a large section of the Hindus, even today, the caste system and untouchability are categorical imperatives. Indeed Arjuna cited enlightened social and moral rules to justify his refusal to perform his god-given task, and Krishna began his enlightenment with a sharp rebuke to him, "Thou grieveest for those that should not be grieved for, yet speakest words of wisdom".

We have no space to consider all the inaccuracies of the author, they are the common errors committed in the current interpretations of the Gita. For a masterly exposition of the spiritual ideal as compared with the current secular ideologies which are standing in the way of the spiritual regeneration of mankind, we refer the reader to the last chapter of *The Life Divine* to which we referred at the very beginning. Here we shall quote only one paragraph from that chapter: "For this ideal, this conscious stress on the material and economic life was in fact a civilised reversion to the first state of man,

¹ Indeed Arjuna, while hearing those truths, is prompted to say, "All this Thou sayest my mind holds for the truth, O Keshava."

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his early barbaric state and its preoccupation with life and matter, a spiritual retrogression with the resources of the mind of a developed humanity and a fully evolved science at its disposal. As an element in the total complexity of human life, this stress on a perfected economic and material existence has its place in the whole: as a sole or predominant stress it is for humanity itself, for the evolution itself full of danger. The first danger is a resurgence of the old vital and material primitive barbarian in a civilised form; the means Science has put at our disposal eliminates the peril of the subversion and destruction of an effete civilisation by stronger primitive peoples; but it is the insurgence of the barbarian in ourselves, in civilised man that is the peril and this we see all around us. For that is bound to come if there is no high and strenuous mental and moral ideal controlling and uplifting the vital and physical man in us and no spiritual ideal liberating him from himself into his inner being. Even if this relapse is escaped there is another danger, —for a cessation of the evolutionary urge, a crystallisation into a stable comfortable mechanical social living without ideal or outlook is another possible outcome. Reason by itself cannot long maintain the race in its progress; it can do so only if it is a mediator between the life and body and something higher and greater within him: for it is the inner spiritual necessity, the push from what is there yet unrealised within him that maintains in him, once he has attained to mind, the evolutionary stress, the spiritual nisis. That renounced, he must either relapse and begin all over again or disappear like other forms of life before him as an evolutionary failure, through incapacity to maintain or to serve the evolutionary urge."

A.B.

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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - Sri Aurobindo.

EDITORIALS*

THE NATURE AND DESTINY OF ART

TRUE art means the expression of beauty in the material world. In a world wholly converted, that is to say, expressing integrally the divine reality, art must serve as the revealer and teacher of this divine beauty in life. In other words, the artist must be able to enter into communion with the Divine and receive the inspiration as to what should be the form or forms for the material realisation of the divine beauty. At the same time, in expressing true beauty in the physical, he also sets an example, becomes an instrument of education. Art not only creates beauty, but educates the taste of people to find true beauty, the essential beauty that expresses the divine truth. That is the true role of art. But between that and what it is now there is a great difference.

The decline comes in the normal course of evolution which follows a spiral movement. From the beginning of the last century to the middle of it,

* Based on the Mother's Talks.

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art became totally a debased thing, commercial, obscure, ignorant, something very far from its true nature and function. But the spirit of art cannot die; only as it rose as a movement of protest or revolt, the forms it chose were equally bad. In attempting to counteract the general debasing of taste it went to the other extreme, as is the character of all movements of nature. One was a servile copy of nature, it was pointed out or not even that. In those days it used to be called photographic art, if one were to abuse it. But now it is no longer a term of abuse, for photography has developed into a consummate art. Neither could it be truly called realism, for there are realistic paintings which belong to a very high order. That art was conventional, artificial, lifeless. Now the reaction to this movement said: we do not concern ourselves with physical life any more, the reality as we see with outward eyes is no longer our business; we want instead to express the vital life, the mental life. Hence came a whole host of reformers and rebels—cubists, surrealists, futurists and so on—who sought to create art with their head. They forgot the simple truth that in art it is not the head that commands, but the feeling of beauty in the heart. So art landed into the the most absurd, ridiculous and frightful of worlds. Indeed with the two wars behind us we have gone further in that direction. Each war has brought down a world in decomposition. And now we seem to be in the very heart of chaos.

Perhaps we are at the bottom of the curve and it is time to mount up. This disintegration is a necessary prelude; it is even from a certain point of view a better condition than that of the epoch of Queen Victoria or the Second Empire in France, the age of the practical successful bourgeoisie, of snug contentment and dull mediocrity, of death in life. As I say, the movement of progress follows a curve. In a certain epoch some fine things are expressed in a fine way. Then follows an epoch which is tired of the old things, wants to find new things and express in a new way. The age of Louis XIV, for example, was an age dominated by the sense of artistic creation and it represented the peak of a certain type of the truly beautiful in art and life. In the course of social evolution other ideas, other needs appeared—those of a commercial age. So the curve took a downward course. For there is nothing so antagonistic to art as commerce. For the association of commerce with art means the popularisation of something which is exceptional: it is putting within the reach of all and sundry a thing which is understood and appreciated only by the chosen few, the élite. Perhaps it is because of this, because art has no outlet in the world, it has in these days turned to other directions,

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into the domains of the mental and the vital, into sideways and bypaths of consciousness. When, however, better conditions prevail, when instead of the spirit of mercantilism, there appears upon earth the sense of a more beautiful reality, then art will be reborn and come to its own. That seems to be still a long way off.

The art of this decadent epoch is what I call mushroom art. You know how mushrooms grow? They grow anywhere and do not seem to form part, for example, of what you cultivate or where you cultivate. Just think of it! There is a spot on the wall which becomes humid and you see it soon covered with this growth. You have a tree which does not get the sunlight, you will find its roots covered with mushrooms. It is a kind of spontaneous growth which is not linked to the spot where it grows. It is not a limb of its environment, but something extraneous added to it. Instead of mushrooms, I could have spoken of parasites: they belong to the same category. You have seen parasite plants? They grow upon trees, they fix themselves there. They have not their own life and organs, they do not draw their food directly from earth, as all normal plants do; they live upon the life of another, make use of the labour of another. There are also animal parasites that live upon another animal, growing and profiting by its labour. Parasites or mushrooms have no *raison d'être* to be where they are—they are invaders, interpolators, anomalies.

In ancient times, in the great ages, in Greece, for example or even during the Italian Renaissance, particularly, however, in Greece and in Egypt, they erected buildings, constructed monuments for the sake of public utility. Their buildings were meant for the most part to be temples, sanctuaries to lodge their gods and deities. What they had in view was something total, whole and entire, beautiful and complete in itself. That was the purpose of architecture embodying the harmony of sweeping and majestic lines: sculpture was a part of architecture supplying details of expression and even painting came up to complete the expression: but the whole held together in a coordinated unity which was the monument itself. The sculpture was for the monument, the painting was for the monument; it was not that each was separate from the other and existed for itself and one did not know why it was there. In India, when a temple was being built, for example, what was aimed at was a total creation, all the parts combined to give effect to one end, to make a beautiful vesture for God, the one object of their adoration. All the great epochs of art were of this kind. But in modern times, in the latter part of the last century, Art became a matter of business. A painting was done

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in order to be sold. You do your paintings, put each one in a frame and place them side by side or group them, that is, lump them together without much reason. The same with regard to sculpture. You do a statue and set it up anywhere without any connection whatsoever with the surrounding. It is always something foreign, extraneous in its setting, like a mushroom or a parasite. The thing in itself may not be quite ugly, but it is out of place, it is not part of an organic whole. We exhibit art today. Indeed, it is exhibitionism, it is the showing off of cleverness, talent, skill, virtuosity. A piece of architecture does not incarnate a living force as it used to do once upon a time. It is no longer the expression of an aspiration, of something that lifts up the spirit nor the expression of the magnificence of the Divine whose dwelling it is meant to be. You build houses here and there and there, pell-mell or somehow juxtaposed without any coordinating idea governing them, without any relation to the environment where they are situated. When you enter a house, it is the same thing. A bit of painting here, a bit of sculpture there, some *objects of art* in one corner, a few others in another. Yes, it is an exhibition, a museum, a kaleidoscopic collection. It gives a shock to the truly sensitive artistic taste.

I do not say that a museum is not necessary or useful. It is a good means of education, that is to say, getting information about what other people or other epochs did. It is an aid to the historic knowledge of things. But it is far from being artistic. A museum is not the place where art can find its highest or its true expression. There is an art which seeks to coordinate, integrate distinct, discrete, contrary objects. It is called decorative art. And in so far as this art is successful, we are a step forward even in these days towards true art.

Here in India things are and should be a little different. In spite of the modern European invasion and in spite of certain lapses in some directions—I may refer to what Sri Aurobindo calls the Ravi Varma interlude—the heart of India is not anglicised or Europeanised. The Calcutta School is a sign—although their attempt is rather on a small scale—yet it is a sign that India's artistic taste, in spite of a modern education, still turns to what is essential and permanent in her culture and civilisation. You have still before you, within your reach, the old temples, the old paintings, to teach you that art creation is meant to express a faith, to give you the sense of totality and organisation. You will note in this connection another fact which is very significant. All these paintings, all these sculptures in caves and temples bear no signature. They were not done with the idea of making a name. To-

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day you fix your name to every bit of work you do, announce the event with a great noise in the papers, so that the thing may not be forgotten. In those days the artist did what he had to do, without caring whether posterity would remember his name or not. The work was done in an urge of aspiration towards expressing a higher beauty, above all with the idea of preparing a dwelling fit for the deity whom one invokes. In Europe in the cathedrals of the Middle Age, things were done in the same spirit. There too at that time works were anonymous and bore no signature of the author. If any name came to be preserved, it was more or less by accident.

However, even the commercialism of today, hideous as it is, has an advantage of its own. Commercialism means the mixing together of all parts of the world. It effaces the distinction between Orient and Occident, brings the Orient near to the Occident and the Occident near to the Orient. With the exchange of goods, there happens an exchange of ideas and even of habits and manners. In ancient days Rome conquered Greece and through that conquest was herself conquered by the Culture and Civilisation of Greece. The thing is happening today on a much greater scale and more intensely perhaps. At one time Japan was educating herself on the American pattern; now that America has conquered Japan physically, she is being conquered by the spirit of Japan; even in objects manufactured in America, you notice the Japanese influence in some way or other.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

28-10-1953

A VEDIC HYMN*

1. O Aswins, to him who *striveth*¹ towards *Yajna*² swift-footed lords of bliss³, O much-enjoying Aswins, *become*⁴ delight.

2. O strong, *much-destroying*⁵ Aswins, with the firm and *brilliant*⁶ understanding *take*⁷ joy in my words.

3. O *wasters*⁸, O sons of Nasuta, arrive, ye fierce of deed, *for I have put myself in Yoga*⁹, I have *manifested the flame*.¹⁰

4. Come, O Indra, of manifold brilliance, here are these *vital juices*¹¹ put forth, *extend them with the Powers of being*, O thou of *purified strength*.¹²

5. Come, O Indra, commanded by the understanding and forcibly impelled to the soul-movements of the *full of substantial strength*,¹³ the joyously expanding in soul.¹⁴

6. Come, O Indra, with *force of impulsion*¹⁵ to the soul movements, O *dweller in the brilliance*,¹⁶ uphold our delight in the outpouring of the Soma.

* Rig Veda I. 3. Rishi: Madhuchhandas.

¹ *Riṣ* is either to strive, to injure, to speed or to thrill, quiver or writhe with ecstasy.

² *yajña* may mean (1) Lord (2) yoga (3) action (4) sacrifice.

³ or, good

⁴ or, take

⁵ *puru* Gr. *polus*, much—or, freely giving

⁶ *śaśtrayā*—*hailos* (Gr.)

⁷ or, accept

⁸ or, givers

⁹ *yuvāku*: *yu + āku* like *yuvan*: *yu + an*

¹⁰ *vyktabarhiḥ* spread or opened and light, force, fire.

¹¹ *āyavaḥ*: A clear proof that the Soma of the Veda is not primarily the Soma juice, but Amrita.

¹² or, come with Powers of being and with material Force.

¹³ *sutāvataḥ*: Either *suta + vān* or *su + tāvān* (cf. *revān*); I take the latter.

¹⁴ *vāghataḥ*—a doubtful word. The rendering given is provisional, deduced from the original force of *vā*.

¹⁵ or, force of excitation or, confirmative, protecting force

¹⁶ For *harivaḥ* cf. *adrivaḥ*

A VEDIC HYMN

7. O *loving*¹⁷ ones, O upholders of our *activities*,¹⁸ ye general gods, approach, divide the giver's outpoured Soma.

8. O general gods, ye *active ones*¹⁹ *full of substance*,²⁰ come with speed like lovers to their stalls.

9. O general gods *mighty in force*,²¹ who *stumble*²² not neither do hurt, cleave to the fullness of my *capacity*,²³ O ye who support.

10. Let purifying Saraswati plentiful with florescence of being dwell in *Yajna*²⁴, rich with the understanding.

11. Inspirer of true intuitions, awakener of right thoughts, Saraswati supporteth the Yajna.

12. Saraswati awakeneth to consciousness by *force of will*²⁵ Mahas the ocean and shineth out this way and that in all the movements of the understanding.

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¹⁷ *omāsaḥ*: *ānah* from *am* to love, foster (cf. *Umā*) *U* to be in width between imperfection + complete or fulfilling *m.* or, kindly

¹⁸ *carṣaṇā*: either (1) vision (2) movement (3) action

¹⁹ *ap* to act and *tur* expressing the agent or else meaning swift

²⁰ or, most blissful or auspicious

sutamā cf. *tamaḥ*, *tmisrā* (dense), *tanū*, *tānvā* etc.

²¹ *māyāsaḥ*: Lat. *majores* but not in comparative sense. ²² *stumble* for *ṛdhā* is provisional

²³ *medham*: either (1) ear (2) brain (3) capacity. (cf. *mēdhā*)

²⁴ *yajña* either (1) the Lord (2) action ²⁵ or, by thought *ketu*, *keta* will, intuition, intellect.

THE LADDER OF SELF-TRANSCENDENCE*

THE transcendence of this lower triple being and this lower triple world, to which ordinarily our consciousness and its powers and results are limited,—a transcendence described by the Vedic seers as an exceeding or breaking beyond the two firmaments of heaven and earth,—opens out a hierarchy of infinitudes to which the normal existence of man even in its highest and widest flights is still a stranger. Into that altitude, even to the lowest step of its hierarchy, it is difficult for him to rise. A separation, acute in practice though unreal in essence, divides the total being of man, the microcosm, as it divides also the world-being, the macrocosm. Both have a higher and a lower hemisphere, the *parārdha* and *aparārdha* of the ancient wisdom. The higher hemisphere is the perfect and eternal reign of the Spirit; for there it manifests without cessation or diminution its infinities, deploys the unconcealed glories of its illimitable existence, its illimitable consciousness and knowledge, its illimitable force and power, its illimitable beatitude. The lower hemisphere belongs equally to the Spirit; but here it is veiled, closely, thickly, by its inferior self-expression of limiting mind, confined life and dividing body. The Self in the lower hemisphere is shrouded in name and form; its consciousness is broken up by the division between the internal and external, the individual and universal; its vision and sense are turned outward; its force, limited by division of its consciousness, works in fetters; its knowledge, will, power, delight, divided by this division, limited by this limitation, are open to the experience of their contrary or perverse forms, to ignorance, weakness and suffering. We can indeed become aware of the true Self or Spirit in ourselves by turning our sense and vision inward; we can discover too the same Self or Spirit in the external world and its phenomena by plunging them there also inward through the veil of names and forms to that which dwells in these or else stands behind them. Our normal consciousness through this inward look may become by reflection aware of the infinite being, consciousness and delight of the Self and share in its passive or static infinity of these things. But we can only to a very limited extent share

* *Synthesis of Yoga*, Chapter XXXIII (*Arya* Vol. IV), revised by Sri Aurobindo

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in its active or dynamic manifestation of knowledge, power and joy. Even this static identity by reflection cannot, ordinarily, be effected without a long and difficult effort and as the result of many lives of progressive self-development; for very firmly is our normal consciousness bound to the law of its lower hemisphere of being. To understand the possibility of transcending it at all, we must restate in a practical formula the relations of the worlds which constitute the two hemispheres.

All is determined by the Spirit, for all from subtlest existence to grossest matter is manifestation of the Spirit. But the Spirit, Self or Being determines the world it lives in and the experiences of its consciousness, force and delight in that world by some poise—among many possible—of the relations of Purusha and Prakriti, Soul and Nature,—some basic poise in one or other of its own cosmic principles. Poised in the principle of Matter, it becomes the physical self of a physical universe in the reign of a physical Nature; Spirit is then absorbed in its experience of Matter; it is dominated by the ignorance and inertia of the tamasic Power proper to physical existence. In the individual it becomes a materialised soul, *annamaya puruṣa*, whose life and mind have developed out of the ignorance and inertia of the material principle and are subject to their fundamental limitations. For life in Matter works in dependence on the body; mind in Matter works in dependence on the body and on the vital or nervous being; spirit itself in Matter is limited and divided in its self-relation and its powers by the limitations and divisions of this matter-governed and life-driven mind. This materialised soul lives bound to the physical body and its narrow superficial external consciousness, and it takes normally the experiences of its physical organs, its senses, its matter-bound life and mind, with at most some limited spiritual glimpses, as the whole truth of existence.

Man is a spirit, but a spirit that lives as a mental being in physical Nature; he is to his own self-consciousness a mind in a physical body. But at first is this mental being materialised and he takes the materialised soul, *annamaya puruṣa*, for his real self. He is obliged to accept, as the Upanishad expresses it, Matter for the Brahman because his vision here sees Matter as that from which all is born, by which all lives and to which all return in their passing. His natural highest concept of Spirit is an Infinite, preferably an inconscient Infinite, inhabiting or pervading the material universe (which alone it really knows), and manifesting by the power of its presence all these forms around him. His natural highest conception of himself is a vaguely conceived soul or spirit, a soul manifested only by

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the physical life's experiences, bound up by with physical phenomena and forced on its dissolution to return by an automatic necessity to the vast indeterminateness of the Infinite. But because he has the power of self-development, he can rise beyond these natural conceptions of the materialised soul; he can supplement them with a certain derivative experience drawn from supra-physical planes and worlds. He can concentrate in mind and develop the mental part of his being, usually at the expense of the fullness of his vital and physical life and in the end the mind predominates and can open to the Beyond. He can concentrate this self-liberating mind on the Spirit. Here too usually in the process he turns away more and more from his full mental and physical life; he limits or he discourages their possibilities as much as his material foundation in nature will allow him. In the end his spiritual life predominates, destroys his earthward tendency and breaks its ties and limitations. Spiritualised, he places his real existence beyond in other worlds, in the heavens of the vital or mental plane; he begins to regard life on earth as a painful or troublesome incident or passage in which he can never arrive at any full enjoyment of his inner ideal self, his spiritual essence. Moreover, his highest conception of the Self or Spirit is apt to be more or less quietistic; for, as we have seen, it is its static infinity alone that he can entirely experience, the still freedom of Purusha unlimited by Prakriti, the Soul standing back from Nature. There may come indeed some divine dynamic manifestation in him, but it cannot rise entirely above the heavy limitations of physical Nature. The peace of the silent and passive Self is more easily attainable and he can more easily and fully hold it; too difficult for him is the bliss of an infinite activity, the dynamis of an immeasurable Power.

But the spirit can be poised in the principle of Life, not in Matter. The Spirit so founded becomes the vital self of a vital world, the Life-soul of a Life-energy in the reign of a consciously dynamic Nature. Absorbed in the experiences of the power and play of a conscious Life, it is dominated by the desire, activity and passion of the rajasic principle proper to vital existence. In the individual this spirit becomes a vital soul, *prāṇamaya puruṣa*, in whose nature the life-energies tyrannise over the mental and physical principles. The physical element in a vital world readily shapes its activities and formations in response to desire and its imaginations, it serves and obeys the passion and power of life and their formations and does not thwart or limit them as it does here on earth where life is a precarious incident in inanimate Matter. The mental element too is moulded and limited by

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the life-power, obeys it and helps only to enrich and fulfil the urge of its desires and the energy of its impulses. This vital soul lives in a vital body composed of a substance much subtler than physical matter, it is a substance surcharged with conscious energy, capable of much more powerful perceptions, capacities, sense-activities than any that the gross atomic elements of earth-matter can offer. Man, too, has in himself behind his physical being, subliminal to it, unseen and unknown but very close to it and forming with it the most naturally active part of his existence, this vital soul, this vital nature and this vital body; a whole vital plane connected with the life-world or desire-world is hidden in us, a secret consciousness in which life and desire find their untrammelled play and their easy self-expression and from there throw their influences and formations on our outer life.

In proportion as the power of this vital plane manifests itself in him and takes hold of his physical being, this son of earth becomes a vehicle of the life energy, forceful in his desires, vehement in his passions and emotions, intensely dynamic in his action, more and more the rajasic man. It is possible now for him to awaken in his consciousness to the vital plane and to become the vital soul, *prāṇamaya puruṣa*, put on the vital nature and live in the secret vital as well as the visible physical body. If he achieves this change with some fullness or one-pointedness—usually it is under great and salutary limitations, or attended by saving complexities—and without rising beyond these things, without climbing to a supra-vital height from which they can be used, purified, uplifted, he becomes the lower type of Asura or Titan, a Rakshasa in nature, a soul of sheer power and life-energy, magnified or racked by a force of unlimited desire and passion, hunted and driven by an active capacity and colossal rajasic ego, but in possession of far greater and more various powers than those of the physical man in the ordinary more inert earth-nature. Even if he develops mind greatly on the vital plane and uses its dynamic energy for self-control as well as for self-satisfaction, it will still be with an Asuric energism (*tapasyā*) although of a higher type and directed to a more governed satisfaction of the rajasic ego.

But for the vital plane also it is possible, even as on the physical, to rise to a certain spiritual greatness in its own kind. It is open to the vital man to lift himself beyond the conceptions and energies natural to the desire-soul and the desire-plane. He can develop a higher mentality and, within the conditions of the vital being,

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concentrate upon some realisation of the Spirit or Self behind or beyond its forms and powers. In this spiritual realisation there would be a less strong necessity of quietism; for there would be a greater possibility of an active effectuation of the bliss and power of the Eternal, mightier and more self-satisfied powers, a richer flowering of the dynamic Infinite. Nevertheless that effectuality could never come anywhere near to a true and integral perfection; for the conditions of the desire-world are like those of the physical improper to the development of the complete spiritual life. The vital being too must develop spirit to the detriment of his fullness, activity and force of life in the lower hemisphere of our existence and turn in the end away from the vital formula, away from life either to the Silence or to an ineffable Power beyond him. If he does not withdraw from life, he must remain enchained by life, limited in his self-fulfilment by the downward pull of the desire-world in its own right alone, and its dominant rajasic principle. On the vital plane also, a perfect perfection is impossible; the soul that attains only so far would have to return to the physical life for a greater experience, a higher self-development, a more direct ascent to the Spirit.

Above matter and life stands the principle of mind, nearer to the secret Origin of things. The Spirit poised in mind becomes the mental self of a mental world and dwells there in the reign of its own pure and luminous mental Nature. There it acts in the intense freedom of the cosmic Intelligence supported by the combined workings of a psycho-mental and a higher emotional mind-force, subtilised and enlightened by the clarity and happiness of the sattwic principle proper to the mental existence. In the individual the spirit so poised becomes a mental soul, *manomaya puruṣa*, in whose nature the clarity and luminous power of the mind acts in its own right independent of any limitation or oppression by the vital or corporeal instruments; it rather rules and determines entirely the forms of its body and the powers of its life. For mind in its own plane is not limited by life and obstructed by matter as it is here in the earth-process. This mental soul lives in a mental or subtle body which enjoys capacities of knowledge, perception, sympathy and interpenetration with other beings hardly imaginable by us and a free, delicate and extensive mentalised sense-faculty not limited by the grosser conditions of the life nature or the physical nature.

Man too has in himself, subliminal, unknown and unseen concealed behind his waking consciousness and visible organism this mental soul, mental nature, mental body and a mental plane, not materialised, in which the

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principle of Mind is at home and not as here at strife with a world which is alien to it, obstructive to its freedom and corruptive of its purity and clearness. All the higher faculties of man, his intellectual and psycho-mental being and powers, his higher emotional life awaken and increase in proportion as this mental plane in him presses upon him. For the more it manifests, the more it influences the physical parts, the more it enriches and elevates the corresponding mental plane of the embodied nature. At a certain pitch of its increasing sovereignty it can make man truly man and not merely a reasoning animal; for it gives then its characteristic force to the mental being within us which our humanity is in the inwardly governing but still too hampered essence of its psychological structure.

It is possible for man to awaken to this higher mental consciousness, to become this mental being¹, put on this mental nature and live not only in the vital and physical sheaths, but in this mental body. If there were a sufficient completeness in this transformation he would become capable of a life and a being at least half divine. For he would enjoy powers and a vision and perceptions beyond the scope of this ordinary life and body; he would govern all by the clarities of pure knowledge; he would be united to other beings by a sympathy of love and happiness; his emotions would be lifted to the perfection of the psycho-mental plane, his sensations rescued from grossness, his intellect subtle, pure and flexible, delivered from the deviations of the impure pranic energy and the obstructions of matter. And he would develop too the reflection of a wisdom and bliss higher than any mental joy and knowledge; for he could receive more fully and without our incompetent mind's deforming and falsifying mixture the inspirations and intuitions that are the arrows of the supramental Light and form his perfected mental existence in the mould and power of that vaster splendour. He could then realise too the self or Spirit in a much larger and more luminous and more intimate intensity than is now possible and with a greater play of its active power and bliss in the satisfied harmony of his existence.

¹ I include here in mind, not only the highest range of mind ordinarily known to man, but yet higher ranges to which he has either no current faculty of admission or else only a partial and mixed reception of some faint portion of their powers,—the illumined mind, the intuition and finally the creative Overmind or Maya which stands far above and is the source of our present existence. If mind is to be understood only as Reason or human intelligence, then the free mental being and its state would be something much more limited and very inferior to the description given here.

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And to our ordinary notions this may well seem to be a consummate perfection, something to which man might aspire in his highest flights of idealism. No doubt, it would be a sufficient perfection for the pure mental being in its own character, but it would still fall far below the greater possibilities of the spiritual nature. For here too our spiritual realisation would be subject to the limitations of the mind which is in the nature of a reflected, diluted and diffused or narrowly intensive light, not the vast and comprehensive self-existent luminosity and joy of the spirit. That vaster light, that profounder bliss are beyond the mental reaches. Mind indeed can never be a perfect instrument of the Spirit; a supreme self-expression is not possible in its movements because to separate, divide, limit is its very character. Even if mind could be free from all positive falsehood and error, even if it could be all intuitive and infallibly intuitive, it could still present and organise only half-truths or separate truths and these too not in their own body but in luminous representative figures put together to make an accumulated total or a massed structure. Therefore the self-perfecting mental being here must either depart into pure spirit by the shedding of its lower existence or return upon the physical life to develop in it a capacity not yet found in our mental and psychic nature. This is what the Upanishad expresses when it says that the heavens attained by the mind Purusha are those to which man is lifted by the rays of the sun, the diffused, separated, though intense beams of the supramental truth-consciousness, and from these it has to return to the earthly existence. But the illumines who renouncing earth-life go beyond through the gateways of the sun, do not return hither. The mental being exceeding his sphere does not return because by that transition he enters a high range of existence peculiar to the superior hemisphere. He cannot bring down its greater spiritual nature into this lower triplicity; for here the mental being is the highest expression of the Self. Here the triple mental, vital and physical body provides almost the whole range of our capacity and cannot suffice for that greater consciousness; the vessel has not been built to contain a greater godhead or to house the splendours of this supramental force and knowledge.

This limitation is true only so long as man remains closed within the boundaries of the mental Maya. If he rises into the knowledge-self beyond the highest mental stature, if he becomes the knowledge-soul, the Spirit poised in gnosis, *vijñānamaya puruṣa*, and puts on the nature of its infinite truth and power, if he lives in the knowledge-sheath, the causal body as well as in these subtle mental interlinking vital and grosser physical sheaths or

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bodies, then, but then only he would be able to draw down entirely into his terrestrial existence the fullness of the infinite spiritual consciousness; only then will he avail to raise his total being and even his whole manifested, embodied expressive nature into the spiritual kingdom. But this is difficult in the extreme; for the causal body opens itself readily to the consciousness and capacities of the spiritual planes and belongs in its nature to the higher hemisphere of existence, but it is either not developed at all in man or only as yet crudely developed and organised and veiled behind many intervening portals of the subliminal in us. It draws its stuff from the plane of the truth-knowledge and the plane of the infinite bliss and these pertain altogether to a still inaccessible higher hemisphere. Shedding upon this lower existence their truth and light and joy they are the source of all that we call spirituality and all that we call perfection. But this infiltration comes from behind thick coverings through which they arrive so tempered and weakened that they are entirely obscured in the materiality of our physical perceptions, grossly distorted and perverted in our vital impulses, perverted too though a little less grossly in our ideative seekings, minimised even in the comparative purity and intensity of the highest intuitive ranges of our mental nature. The supra-mental principle is secretly lodged in all existence. It is there even in the grossest materiality, it preserves and governs the lower worlds by its hidden power and law; but that power veils itself and that law works unseen through the shackled limitations and limping deformations of the lesser rule of our physical, vital, mental Nature. Yet its governing presence in the lowest forms assures us, because of the unity of all existence, that there is a possibility of their awakening, a possibility even of their perfect manifestation here in spite of every veil, in spite of all the mass of our apparent disabilities, in spite of the incapacity or unwillingness of our mind and life and body. And what is possible, must one day be, for that is the law of the omnipotent Spirit.

The character of these higher states of the soul and their greater worlds of spiritual Nature is necessarily difficult to seize. Even the Upanishads and the Veda only shadow them out by figures, hints and symbols. Yet it is necessary to attempt some account of their principles and practical effect so far as they can be grasped by the mind that stands on the border of the two hemispheres. The passage beyond that border would be the culmination, the completeness of the Yuga of self-transcendence, by self-knowledge. The soul that aspires to perfection, draws back and upward, says the Upanishad, from the physical into the vital and from the vital into the mental Purusha,—from the mental into the knowledge-soul and from that self of knowledge

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into the bliss Purusha. This self of bliss is the conscious foundation of perfect Sachchidananda and to pass into it completes the soul's ascension. The mind therefore must try to give to itself some account of this decisive transformation of the embodied consciousness, this radiant transfiguration and self-exceeding of our ever aspiring nature. The description mind can arrive at, can never be adequate to the thing itself, but it may point at least to some indicative shadow of it or perhaps some half-luminous image.

SRI AUROBINDO

Be wide in me, O Varuna; be mighty in me, O Indra; O Sun, be very bright and luminous; O Moon, be full of charm and sweetness. Be fierce and terrible, O Rudra; be impetuous and swift, O Maruts; be strong and bold, O Aryama; be voluptuous and pleasurable, O Bhaga; be tender and kind and loving and passionate, O Mitra. Be bright and revealing, O Dawn; O Night, be solemn and pregnant. O Life, be full, ready and buoyant; O Death, lead my steps from mansion to mansion. Harmonise all these, O Brahmanaspati. Let me not be subject to these gods, O Kali.

SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO
INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY CENTRE
THE PURSUIT OF PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY

I

SRI Aurobindo was essentially a spiritual Master and his work too was primarily a spiritual one, viz., that of substantially raising the level of human consciousness. The method of it constitutes the technique of his Integral Yoga. But the cultural life of man is the best objective creation and representation of his inner consciousness as also an effective means of its growth and cultivation. Evidently, cultural life and its progressive advancement would belong to a system and method of life, which seeks a radical rise in the level of human consciousness. Integral Yoga is fully aware of this responsibility and, therefore, it includes a whole program of the pursuit and advancement of knowledge, in fact of all cultural life. In the present context we would consider Sri Aurobindo's plan and program of human knowledge alone, which, in fact, constitutes the reason and justification for founding the new university in Pondicherry.

Francis Bacon had in the 16th century given to the modern world a new outlook and program regarding the pursuit of knowledge and that had served to terminate the life and outlook of the middle ages and open doors to a new civilisation and system of life. Its last terms were that the senses and reason are the highest instruments of knowledge and that nature is the proper subject-matter of it. Further that man, in full trust and confidence in himself, could pursue knowledge and gain power. The outlook and program has in the course of four centuries, since then, completely justified itself. Man is today a confident master of nature and has evidently succeeded in creating, through such mastery, a new civilisation.

But with this success have appeared some new problems too. Though a master of the secrets of nature, man does not feel a master of his own life, neither in the individual nor in the mass. Sri Aurobindo sums up his reading of this baffling situation in these words: "Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity....

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A greater whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole-life."¹

Thus, new faculties of cognition, affection and conation or a new quality of personality are now called for. His appreciation of reason is full and hearty. It is an indispensable instrument for the organisation and systematisation of external life. But its essential method is analysis and where 'wholes' of phenomena or the ultimate reality are concerned it proves inadequate. Our present mental life owns a great mass of analytical information and knowledge, which scientific research has so laboriously accumulated. But we have not the synthetic power and capacity to see and organise the different bodies of knowledge in their proper mutual relations or wholes and, therefore, we lack the sense and confidence of right direction and control over them. Hence culturally man stands today at the threshold of a new age, an age that must usher in capacities of "whole-knowing, whole-feeling and whole-willing", without losing in the least the advantages of a cultivated reason.

Philosophy, the chief representative and organiser of human knowledge, must therefore be a pursuit of Integral Truth and Reality. That means a direct awareness of them and with that must go the growth and development of the proper cognitive functions. Says Sri Aurobindo, "our way of knowing must be appropriate to that which is to be known."² To seek to apply the logic, which has arisen out of our necessity to deal with the finite objects of everyday life, to the Infinite is to make a serious philosophical error. By its basic assumptions it falsifies our conceptions of the Infinite. Kant's problem of the antinomies should be a permanent lesson to philosophy. It most effectively showed what reason was not competent to handle. Sri Aurobindo, therefore, propounds a logic of the Infinite and indicates the basic positions, which thought must respect in its attempts to conceive ultimate reality. In place of a rigid logic of sharply divided concepts, he outlines a comprehending and a plastic movement of thought, which is fully cognisant of the essential characteristics of infinite existence. A direct experience of Truth and no mere construction of It in ideas, inferential or hypothetical, is the clear and full aim of philosophical pursuit. A formulation of It in ideas and representation of the same in language are really to serve as means for evoking and aiding the same experience in others. Evidently ideas and

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II (2) Indian Edition, p. 1160-62.

² *The Life Divine*, Vol. II (1) Indian Edition, p. 43

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language have to be plastic media for the expression of the philosophical truth. Just as our ideas under the trenchant logic of the finite have a tendency to become sharply divided, so also our words under the practical necessity of life have a tendency to become hard and rigid. In order that the philosophy of the future may be able to express the Absolute well enough, it will be necessary to evolve a more plastic and a more symbolic language. Says Sri Aurobindo, "a language has to be created which is at once intuitively metaphysical and revealingly poetical, admitting significant and living images as the vehicle of a close, suggestive and vivid indication."¹

If one is able to agree to the above essentials of the philosophical pursuit, then a study of the "The Life Divine", the principal philosophical work of Sri Aurobindo, will become a wonderful revelation of the truths of life and existence. The varied problems of philosophy, which have persistently baffled solution, will progressively become clear and the delight of the philosophical reader will indeed be great. But the right approach is not easy to take. We are too strongly identified with a clear-cut logical language and too much used to an analytical treatment of the subject-matter. Divisions, classifications and separations of ideas, issues and treatments have become a habit with us. But the need now is, to learn to appreciate 'wholes', see things in their *ensemble*, move from totalities to bigger totalities. And if that motive can be acquired, "The Life Divine" will present on almost every page a new whole, a new totality, a new reconciliation. It will show how the ontological, the epistemological and the axiological must move together, how the finite and the infinite must fulfil each other and how the theoretical and the practical are essentially one.

"The Life Divine" is primarily a work of metaphysics, even though the title might suggest it to be one of religious philosophy. Its essential issue is a reconciliation of the last contradiction of our experience, viz., that of matter and spirit. And this it does in a thorough-going manner in over 1000 pages and in doing so it discusses all major philosophical problems. Its exposition is inspired by a motive to know the last truth of things for its own sake as also by an interest to rise in actual experience to the enjoyment of that truth. And the conclusion of the work is, that existence is in essence the life of the supreme Divine and that man, who is apparently no more than a finite mind, is capable of participating in the full life of the Infinite.

The Life Divine, Vol. II (1) Indian Edition, p. 43

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This participation on the part of the human individual is essentially a matter of the growth of personality and is separately treated by Sri Aurobindo in his work "The Synthesis of Yoga", which is as comprehensive an exposition of the subject as "The Life Divine" is of the problems of truth and existence. Yoga is "advanced psychology" and therefore this great work on his Integral Yoga is virtually an exposition of the psychology of integral personality and the conditions of its growth. The modern man is almost an unrecognisable phenomenon in the long procession of animal evolution. And yet, as Sri Aurobindo says, "The average human being even now is in his inward existence as crude and undeveloped as was the bygone primitive man in his outward life."¹ His psychological existence consists of "a small but clamorous company of desires, some imperative intellectual and aesthetic cravings, some tastes, a few ruling or prominent ideas amid a great current of unconnected or ill-connected and mostly trivial thoughts,"² which are held together in "some practical fashion, some tolerable disorderly order." This is the average material of our normal personality and in the end it all consists of varied adjustments and adaptations to our environment, physical and social. Ordinarily, this is taken to constitute our whole personality and all the labour of the psychologists is turned to discover and identify the different strands of its working, conscious and subconscious, mental and bodily, and formulate the laws of the psycho-physical behaviour of man.

But is personality all a matter of external adaptations? Is its uniqueness merely a matter of a peculiar combination of the traits of personality? The yogic psychology, which relies on the method of deep introspection for the exploration of personality, affirms that our normal personality is just the surface phenomena of our existence. It is truly the "persona", the mask. Within and behind this mask there exists a luminous core of consciousness, which carries in itself the sense of a 'whole', which influences and holds together the external adaptations of surface personality and which lives and acts in its own right. This is the true person, the basis of uniqueness and true identity in each. This is the real spiritual fact of personality; the normal mental life, in relation to it, is derivative and instrumental, since the latter is essentially a means for adaptation to the environment.

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Book I (American Edition), p. 28

² *ibid*, p. 28

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But a deep and a wide inner exploration of personality also reveals some further ranges of consciousness with other qualities and characteristics. There is, for example, the one which Sri Aurobindo calls the subliminal. This is a range of consciousness, by means of which the individual finds himself in contact with the universal in nature. This enables us to get a direct knowledge of other minds. Besides this, there is a whole dimension of the Superconscious. The Subconscious is a dimension now very well known to psychology. It carries in its body our entire past, individual, racial and evolutionary. But, since evolution is a continuing process, it must have a future too and the higher integrations, yet to be achieved, must be a present influence and force. The human consciousness is a superconscious fact and force to the animal consciousness and similarly there may be higher consciousnesses superconscious to the human. These are verifiable facts to yogic exploration.

Sri Aurobindo's special calling of life, one could say, was to discover and explore the superconscious and find out ways and means of making it dynamic in life. It is through it that a substantial raising of the standard of human consciousness can be achieved and that was exactly the fact that interested him most. In the exploration of the superconscious he has identified several successive ranges leading on to the supermind and has given a full characterisation of the power and action of each. These possess varying powers of transforming the normal personality and in yogic practice that demonstratively shows how sex and several other impulses of normal personality, considered inalienable to human nature, are in fact not so. This is bound to oblige a complete reorientation of current psychological knowledge.

This is a broad outline of the integral personality, which Sri Aurobindo's psychological system treats of and it will evidently be the duty of the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre to cultivate this knowledge and make it progressively available to the psychological world.

INDRA SEN

SRI AUROBINDOS MESSAGE TO PHILOSOPHY*

(Continued from the last issue)

If we look at this vast cosmic panorama with our limited apparatus of senses and mind we find that there is nothing but Inconscience at the beginning, and yet there is involved in it the infinite Universal Energy. The vast Inconscience, which has been termed "Chaos" by some religions gives rise to three main emergents or evolutes. The first emergent is Matter, Second is Life, the third is Mind of which man is the representative. This movement of universal energy, called evolution by some people, is not linear but emergent. When the first emergent, Matter, is formed there is the formulation of the indeterminate inconscient with an organised expression of universal material existence. This Matter has its own laws, its properties all of which have not yet been found by man. Mind trying to find out the constitution of Matter has found that at the base of this infinite Universe of Matter there are tiny electrical particles, called electrons. In fact, it is an ocean of electrical energy full of infinitesimal particles which by combination in different numbers, arrangement and movement create this vast material world stretching from this earth to the most distant nebula. Inertia, inconscience, insensibility are its characteristics at first sight; but on further investigation when mind tries to sound the possibilities of Matter, it is found that the powers of material energy are unlimited, that Matter has its own "infinitudes."

When Life emerges in the world of Matter it brings into expression quite different characteristics and potentialities into being. Matter grows by addition: Life grows by assimilation—a crystal of copper sulphate increases by addition of particles, life grows by assimilating elements of food and multiplying cells. Matter does not move by itself, a living being has movement possible to itself. The sensitiveness and response of Matter are, or at least seem to be, mechanical, but they are conscious attributes of Life. When Mind emerges it does not abandon what Universal Energy has already

* Address delivered on 29-12-1953 at the 28th Session of the Indian Philosophical Congress at Baroda.

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created in Matter and Life. As life bases itself upon Matter, so Mind also comes into manifestation on the basis of Life and Matter. Man, the representative of this mental consciousness, has a physical body which is composed of material elements, he has also life energy and a nervous system to support the action of Life and added to this is the mental consciousness. This Mind has powers which are not possessed either by Life or by Matter. Thus, we have this vast cosmic movement with its foundations on the apparent Inconscient and three tiers mounting one upon another—not a linear movement of progression in a straight line, nor a constant ascent or gradient upwards but a climb like the steps of a ladder, or better still, the upward unfolding of a flower, petal by petal, each, revealing a new aspect, a new set of powers. Sri Aurobindo says that this process of emergence is not ended, that though man is at present the highest product, he is not the final one. Man is not the full-point, he is a transitional being. The process is still going on and has yet to go on. There is a level of consciousness beyond Mind which Sri Aurobindo calls the Super Mind which is potential to man. Man has to ascend to the Supermental which is the dynamic Divine Consciousness. Dr. Maitra has said: "the greatest fact about man is that he is more than man". That is to say, the present formulation of man cannot be taken as final and fixed, there are powers and capacities that have yet to be evolved. This aspect of Sri Aurobindo's vision opens out altogether a new prospect for man. It is also clear from Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of this process that this ascent to the higher level cannot be attained by a movement of Inconscient Nature. In man the process has become, or at least can become, self-conscious. It is man's conscious co-operation, his willing opening to this dynamic divine Reality which is the condition of its emergence here. It is true that the Reality above Mind, which is dynamic is also exerting its pressure as it were so as to create here conditions for its descent. Sri Aurobindo says that the problems of men would be on their way to solution when man would succeed in opening to and bringing down in his life this higher Supermental Reality.

I know many people who might accept the rationale of the Supermind—the plane of consciousness beyond mind—would ask whether there is evidence of man wanting to attain it, or having attained it. Fortunately there is plenty of evidence of it not only in his religious efforts and in his philosophy but even in his cultural activities like poetry and fine arts. All religions found themselves on a faith in some super sensual, supraintellectual Reality as the origin and goal of this cosmic movement. The very aspiration for perfection,

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in man from the beginning of history is the sign of his wanting to outgrow his present limitations and attain higher Reality. Besides, man has constantly contacted the levels of consciousness beyond Mind and he has activated in himself faculties from beyond the Mind. The highest poetry created by man is not the product of his mere reason, but that of Inspiration, Intuition or even Revelation. The working of these powers greater than those of Mind, very often, contradicts not only our reason but even the evidence of our senses.

When Shelley says about the Skylark: "Hail to thee! Blithe Spirit! Bird thou never wert"—he not only shocks the ornithologist but directly contradicts the sense data. And yet something within us tells us that the poet is right. The song that flows from the Skylark is the expression of a universal delight and harmony of which the skylark is only an instrument. The point is that man has been contacting these higher than intellectual faculties even in his cultural activities like poetry, literature and arts so that the ascent to a higher level is not altogether unknown to man.

The second contribution to philosophy is his explanation of origin of ignorance on the basis of an Omnipresent Reality. The basic difficulty of the schools of Monism in India has been how to reconcile the existence and persistence of Ignorance with that of the omnipresent Reality. All such efforts had to reduce the world of ignorance and imperfection to an unreality, non-existence, or an illusion, or at best had to grant it a reality of a secondary and an inferior order. Sri Aurobindo has shown that there is no logical necessity to reduce the world of Ignorance to an illusion if an Omnipresent Reality is its basis. Ignorance, falsehood, imperfection, suffering and evil are all explicable on the basis of a divine Omnipresent Reality. It is one of his most original contributions to philosophy, it is a feat of intellectuality which is not mere thought-weaving. Given this Omnipresent Reality the problem is not how it creates Ignorance but how it manages to become ignorant, or to assume Ignorance. How does the Reality that is all-knowledge, all-conscious, all-truth and all-good become ignorant, unconscious, even the opposite of its very self, falsehood and evil? All monistic Schools of philosophy had to admit an undivine principle—Maya, power of illusion, and thus introduce duality by the back door.

Sri Aurobindo has shown that what we experience as ignorance is not something that is fundamentally opposed to the divine Omnipresent Reality. The Omnipresent Reality at each point of its self-existence spontaneously self-determines its manifestation and puts forth an exclusive concentration

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to support it. This it does for a double purpose: firstly, to create out of apparent Inconscient a conscious individual and secondly, to bring about an effectivity in its variations,—to bring into being a world of multiple self-manifestation. Thus, at each point of its self-existence there is a special, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, “an exclusive concentration” which acting spontaneously brings about an effective individualism and variation. In this process the totality of Omnipresent Reality is not destroyed, it is not cut up into parts, it is not fragmented, it is only withdrawn, it is put behind the exclusive concentration, and supports it from there. There is no question of the Omnipresent Reality becoming ignorant because being all-conscient and truth-conscient, and having determined its own manifestation by a spontaneous act of Will, It knows. It is only the ‘ego’, the deformation of the Divine Reality in man, that experiences Ignorance because it is cut off from the Infinite that supports from behind all exclusive concentration of itself on infinite points of self-manifestation. But even for the human being who feels the full burden of Ignorance, it must be admitted, it is not a permanent infliction, not an eternal element of his being. As man is a transitional being his Ignorance is only a stage which he has to outgrow. Man does succeed in his efforts in reducing his Ignorance even with his mental intelligence. It is, in fact, a goad to man to make an attempt to ascend to the higher Supramental consciousness where the original divine Will would be self-realised in consciousness and would thence manifest itself in life. Then the experience of Ignorance would be entirely eliminated being no longer necessary. This elimination of Ignorance has been achieved by some men in the past which proves that it is not an all-pervading and eternal element of this Universe. The seers of the Upanishadas and the Veda, persons like Jesus Christ have expressed the fact and the joy of this elimination of Ignorance in their utterances. The way to eliminate Ignorance is to reject the ego, which is the deformation of the true divine centre in us,—go behind into the “Cave of the Heart” as the Vedas and the Upanishads say, and find there the true Being, the Soul, the Spark of the Divinity in each one of us.

To give some idea of this exclusive concentration of the Omnipresent Reality one might resort to an analogy. It is well-known that man is not a simple, unitarian personality. It is also a matter of common experience that when one personality of man is active the rest of his personalities are put behind, withdrawn. The other personalities are not destroyed, or eliminated, or rendered unreal, they are all capable of being active when the occasion would require them. Thus, in case of a man one of whose personalities is a scientist com-

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plete absorption in his subject,—his exclusive concentration,—would give him effectivity as a scientist. In fact, such an exclusive absorption is the necessary condition for perfection,—the more he forgets his other personalities the better for him as a scientist. Now, this experience of complete absorption would be felt as Ignorance if the man forgot, or became oblivious of, his other personalities, or his Central personality. He would thus feel not merely the effective absorption but the cramping walls of self-limitation. We also can see that the recovery of his total or integral self-consciousness is quite possible.

The exclusive Concentration of the Omnipresent Reality is called "Tapas" in the Upanishads. While explaining the creation of the Universe from the Infinite the Upanishad says "*Sa Tapas taptwa idam Sarvam asrijata*"—"He gathered his energies—resorting to Concentration—created all this." This Ignorance which is an act of Concentration of the Omnipresent Reality is not, as I said before, a permanent or an eternal element of this creation.

The third, and from the practical point of view perhaps the most important, contribution is Sri Aurobindo's view of psychology. There is no unanimity today about the subject matter and about method in the field of psychology. Modern attempts in that field have hardly taken cognisance of the truth that man is a transitional being and that his present psychological make-up has got to undergo change. We have no right to limit arbitrarily man's field of experience to his present state. Today man is living mainly in his waking, extroverted consciousness. But that is not the whole range of experience possible to him.

Sri Aurobindo has given us a more comprehensive view of man's psychology by envisaging the upward ascent of his consciousness, studying the functions of the new faculties and the nature of the new field of experience thus made available to man. He has shown that man as a product of evolution is largely influenced by the sub-conscious on which he stands. So, man has below his waking state the Subconscious, then there is the Conscient—"intra" and the "Circum"—conscient, and above his mental consciousness the Superconscient. His exposition of this whole range of human Consciousness containing the higher potentialities of the Super-Conscient is his original contribution to this Science.

Our President has pleaded for the application of scientific method to psychology. I admit there is a limited field for its application. But the main question is: Are methods of physical science applicable to and authentic in the field of psychology? Do we accept the idea that the Sensible is the only

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Real? Personally, I believe that we cannot admit the scientific method throughout in psychology till we find out the weight of a "thought", calculate the energy of an "impulse" or passion and power of an "idea".

Sri Aurobindo has formulated the ladder of self-transcendence for man. The first step in his upward ascent beyond his mental Consciousness is what he calls the "Higher Mind". Man can remain on this higher level beyond his intellect and act from there in and on life. The stage above this Higher Mind is called the "Illumined Mind" by Sri Aurobindo. Beyond that is the Intuitive Consciousness attainable by man. As the Consciousness goes on ascending the "light" from the Superconscient is able to act more easily and so the darkness of Ignorance goes on thinning more and more till in the Overmind the transitional step between the Super-Conscient Light and mental Ignorance is reached. The Overmind is the global Cosmic Consciousness which universalises the individual while it operates in him, opening him not only to World-forces but also to the Will and knowledge of the Supermind, the dynamic Divine Consciousness. This whole range of the Super-Conscient has been investigated and the knowledge of its functioning made available to us by the great Master.

No less important is his Contribution to knowledge of the Sub-conscient that acts on man from below and his exposition of the psychic being, the true Spiritual spark of individuality in man, is unique. He has sounded the possibilities of Consciousness and given us a spiritual dynamics of Yoga.

In the realm of logic he has made two important suggestions. He has pointed out the limitations of reason as a faculty for grasping Truth. Secondly, he has pleaded that the logic of the Finite and the logic of the Infinite cannot be the same. While 2 plus 2 is equal to 4, Infinity plus Infinity is equal to Infinity. The inability to separate these two kinds of logic is responsible for a lot of confusion in the realm of metaphysics. The logic of the finite has been often extended to the Infinite.

As a corollary to the process of man's ascent to a higher level of Consciousness follows the process of Transformation of Nature. If the human being underwent the process of upward evolutionary ascent his present nature cannot remain unaffected, especially if the purpose of the ascent is not an escape or merging, but bringing down of the higher Truth into life. This transformation, Sri Aurobindo says, would not be a sudden transition or a miraculous change; it would be gradual and graded. It would be accomplished in three stages: (1) Psychicisation, (2) Spiritualisation, (3) Supramentalisation. These stages of transformation of Nature

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would secure not only the elimination of Ignorance but the manifestation of the higher Truth which would lead to the fulfilment of man's integrated personality. It is this transformation of Nature beginning with the domination and lead of the Psychic Being that can result in the true and lasting integration of the human personality; for, the human personality in its ultimate foundation is Divine. The second stage widens out the integrated and partially divinised human nature into universality. The last stage transforms human nature into divine.

The Gita accepts this truth of transformation of Nature because it admits Nature not only as claimant for spiritual freedom but perfection. It admits the possibility of manifestation of divine Nature. It speaks of human greatness of Nature in leaders of men, and of the Vibhuti as the manifestation of the higher Nature in humanity. The Avatar manifests divine Nature in humanity showing the divine potentiality of man.

A necessity is felt for philosophy for humanity today. This vast, all embracing philosophy, this grand synthesis of human knowledge given to us by Sri Aurobindo offers the most satisfying basis for such a philosophy. There is nothing regional about it, it is free from cramping limitations of past traditions, it contains the living Truth of all great philosophies and religions—it is the one vision that holds out hope for the future of man.

Man in his recent progress has sounded the possibilities of Matter—but the untold possibilities of Life and Mind are yet to be tapped. But the call of Sri Aurobindo is for sounding the potentialities of man's Consciousness beyond Mind. It is a call for man not to remain confined to and content with his present state but to rise to the goal of his march Beyond,—to realise his divine destiny. That Beyond is not an extra-cosmic or an aloof Reality, but a dynamic Truth, one intimately related to the Soul of man,—to his individual and Collective Consciousness. If I may be permitted to put it in the traditional language that Reality far from being an incommunicable Absolute is a dynamic Divinity. It is Mother—Power—, the *Mātri-Shakti*, guarding her Creation with all her maternal love and solicitude. It is for man to want, to aspire to, that Divine Reality the Supreme Mother. It is SHE that would help him to transform his Nature and bring down here on earth the Kingdom of God.

In the present world-context, it will be seen that, this philosophy gives the only hope. By his scientific advance man has created such a gigantic structure of economic-centric life,—individual and Collective—that he is not able to cope with it with his limited intellectual powers. Man has got

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hold of a material Energy which is universal but man who uses it is a puny and small ego, there is nothing universal about him.

The alternative solution proposed by thinkers like Bertrand Russell seems very unconvincing, apart from the fact that he does not tell us how the change he desires in man is to be effected. In his broadcasts from London, titled "Living in an atomic age" Russell has tried to trace man's growth and analysed the human problem into three stages: (1) Man versus Nature (2) Man's Struggle with Man, and (3) Man torn and divided in his own being by a sense of Sin. He proposes that if man could adjust his mind to the new scientific advance of the atomic age he would be able to solve his problems. But the diagnosis is not quite correct. His first assertion that Man and Nature have been always and altogether antagonistic is not quite true. Nature offers resistance—you may say even opposition—to man but She does not do it to crush and destroy man. It is Nature in fact that supports man. The air we breathe and the nourishment we assimilate are provided by Nature. Tagore in his book *Sādhanā* has dwelt upon this aspect and shown that Nature is helpful and beneficent. In fact, Nature is like a bride that has to be won. It is She who lays bare before man—the Purusha—her inexhaustible riches and it is Nature that arms man to conquer her. /

About the third point in his analysis i.e. Man divided within himself by sense of sin—Russell's statement is incomprehensible. He says that the self-division of man, created by the infliction of the sense of Sin, is the cause of his conflicts. Man projects this sense of Sin on other men. In man a portion of himself is Sinful but the enemy is entirely made of Sin. This reading of Russell is entirely at variance with facts of experience. Not a single English or German soldier thought that the whole of his enemy is made of Sin. And even assuming that Russell's remedy may be worth trying, it amounts to effecting a change in man's psychology. That is to say, the problem of man is man,—it is a psychological problem. The only two remedies found out by man today are Democracy and Economic Reconstruction. Even they cannot succeed unless there is psychological change. It is not mere adjustment and compromise that will solve man's problem. It is a radical change that is required. That change is the change envisaged by Sri Aurobindo, as the Supramental Ascent which can render possible the descent of the Truth-Consciousness into Life. Inadequacy of Mind as the instrument of this Change has been pointed out by many philosophers and even from your own Congress Prof. Chubb and Dr. Indra Sen have contributed papers to show the limitations of Mind and the existence of other than mental content

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in mental constructions.

I may, in conclusion, try to formulate Sri Aurobindo's message to philosophy, as far as possible, in his own inimitable words from his great epic. I will speak the language of poetry which is the inspired word of wisdom—and after all poetry, philosophy, religion and art, are sister activities:

O Philosophy, Goddess of Light,
Thou who art the embodiment of love of Wisdom,
do not say to man:

“This is the end there is no beyond.”

for, all organised thought is

“Ordered knowledge of apparent things.”

Remember that

“We are not left alone in a closed scheme
Between a driving Inconscient force
And an incommunicable Absolute.”

If thou art assailed by doubt think:

“Is the Sun a Dream because there is Night?”

Also remember that

“Inconscient has its sealed infinitudes”
that,

“Our Minds are starters in the race to God”.

This vast Cosmic movement is

“the pilgrimage of Nature to the Unknown.”

Always remember that:

“Truth is wider, greater than her forms
A thousand icons they have made of her
But She remains herself—and infinite.”

The human being is “a Way-lost God”

SRI AUROBINDO'S MESSAGE TO PHILOSOPHY

O Philosopher:

"Make thy daily life a pilgrimage"

for, at present man's

"little 'I' has swallowed the whole world. His ego has stretched into infinity."

Thy real task is not to construct a system of thought: thy real work is:

"To build a new world, a new heaven." However attractive the escape, remember that "Escape is not the Solution."

"A greater power must come; a larger Light",

One of thy great tasks is to establish "a deep

Concordat between Truth and Life."

Philosophy, to be living, must not merely be a profession of the intellect, affirmation of the Mind. It is a flame of the Soul, an unquenchable flame.

O Philosophy: "Because thou art, the Soul draws near to God

Because thou art, love grows in spite of hate,

And knowledge walks unslain in pit of Night"

"But not by showering heaven's golden rain

Upon the intellect's hard and rocky soil

Can the true Paradise flower on earthly ground."

Can you, O Goddess of Light! O Philosophy!

See that "here on earth a Camp of God is pitched in human time" ?

O Philosophy, it is thy privilege

"To, seize the Absolute in Shapes that pass,

To feel the Eternal's touch in time-made things,

This is the Law of all perfection here."

A. B. PURANI

THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE

PART II

WE have seen that the proper perspective of Indian culture is the spiritual and that it can be developed only by a regular self-discipline and self-transcendence. If somebody thinks that, because he is an Indian and intellectually enlightened, he can feel the pulse of the national spirit and touch the core of its culture, he is sadly mistaken. That would have perhaps been possible two or three hundred years ago, but it is not possible today when the outlook of man all the world over has undergone such a considerable change under the pervading influence of Materialism and his higher values have foundered on the shoals of an almost exclusive material preoccupation. Barring a few cases of exceptional insight or intuition, there is a general dead level of mental incomprehension and misinterpretation of the essence of Indian culture. Even where there is an attitude of respect and a will to appreciate, the right approach is lacking and the right preparation and aptitude, *adhikara*, to understand; and that cripples many an enthusiastic endeavour. Had Indian culture been a mental culture like that of the Greeks or a purely materialistic culture like the one in which we live at present, a sympathetic mental approach would have been quite adequate and led to a more or less correct evaluation. But Indian culture being essentially spiritual, the spiritual perspective, born of a spiritual aspiration and intuition, can alone yield the right results. We must learn, then, to dive deep into Indian culture, if we really want to see the treasures it contains and bring them out to enrich and illuminate our life.

What do we see when we evolve the right perspective? What is the new vision that, as Sardar Panikkar reminds us, is rising before us? What is the new civilisation that India is developing and the new way of life to which she is beckoning humanity? An influential group of sociologists with Sorokin at its head is dreaming of a reconstruction of humanity and declaring that the key to this reconstruction lies in the superconscient. But who will explore the superconscient and discover the key? Certainly not Western humanity which, at its present mental level of evolution, seems to have

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exhausted all its inner resources and gone dismally bankrupt. The ascent of its mind has been arrested and its mental energies, its intellect, its imagination are all being increasingly prostituted to the service of its desire-soul which seeks the satisfaction of its selfish ambitions, its blind appetites and animal instincts. If the key to the reconstruction of humanity lies in the superconscient, then it is evident that the superconscient has to be attained and explored; and that is precisely the function of a spiritual culture. A growth and expansion of spiritual culture is the dire need of the moment, and what other country than India can meet that need? It is she alone that can discover the key and lead mankind to a new age of divine living. Man feels frustrated and forlorn in the howling wilderness of a soulless mechanistic civilisation in which his materialism has landed him.

The vision that is rising before India is the vision of a divine living, a spiritual way of life for humanity. But what is divine living? Most of us seem to have a very vague and confused notion of it. It would, therefore, be worth our while to consider it and try to form a clear and definite conception of it, if possible. But before we do that, it would be conducive to the formation of that conception to indicate the nature of the spiritual culture that would lead to the divine living.

There are two outstanding characteristics of the spirituality that is rising in India today. The first is its vigorous dynamism and its uncompromising repudiation of the ascetic or monastic traditions of the past. The days of the anchorite and the escapist have gone, and with them the glorification of the quietistic tendency and the superior contempt for the salutary labours of life. A greater knowledge of the significance of the human birth and God's intention in the material world is dawning upon human consciousness. We are learning to look upon the world as a manifested form of the universal Brahman¹ and have thrown overboard the dispiriting, anti-vitalistic doctrine of Maya or illusion. Life is real, life is eternal, and its goal is neither the gaping Nihil nor the impersonal, impassive Immutable. The real, the ultimate goal of life is the Divine, the Divine here and now as much as the Divine beyond; and of all beings in the universe, it is man alone who has the privilege of realising and manifesting Him here, on this earth. Not escape from this life, but a complete divinisation of it is, therefore, the work man has been set here to accomplish. Founded upon this illumined teleology of the world and human life, the renascent spirituality in India is rising with a mighty

¹ *Brahmaivedam Vishvamidam Varishtham.*

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dynamism, a colossal creative force, to actualise the truths of its awakening vision. It bids fair to permeate all life, embrace all its aspects and stimulate and quicken all its dynamic energies. It will leave no part of human life untouched, untransformed and unfulfilled.

The second characteristic of the new spirituality is that it has been itself baptised in the fire of the supreme Truth-Consciousness. The source of its surging dynamism is not religious humanism or philanthropy, which is an ethical, that is to say, mental motive, but the supreme Will of the Divine as it is manifest in its original purity in the creative Vijnana. Traditional spirituality, except, of course, the most ascetic and other-worldly type, has been spiritual in its depths, but mostly ethical in its life-expression. The representatives of this spirituality have enjoyed union and communion with the Divine or with the Self or Atman in their inmost consciousness and being, but in their dealings with the world they have allowed themselves to be guided by their exalted sattwic feelings of compassion, kindness, sympathy, benevolence etc. They have engaged in beneficent activities of many kinds, which have a considerable purifying influence and serve as inspiring examples of the humanitarian or altruistic attitude. But if they take a detached and penetrating view of these activities, they will see that they do not proceed direct from the centre of their consciousness, but are a mental translation of their inner soul-state. They are, at their best, a spontaneous play of their sattwic nature, and have usually a twofold purpose behind them: relief and succour to suffering humanity and its guidance on the way to liberation (mukti). There is no intention in these activities to discover and fulfil the divine Will in the world. This distinction between the works directed by the divine Will and those done by the sattwic mind of man has to be clearly seized if we want to understand the difference between the spirituality of yesterday and the dynamic spirituality that is rising in India today. Religious humanism can help and heal to a certain extent, but it cannot transform human nature into divine nature and human life into divine life, for it has neither the knowledge nor the power to do it. It restricts its scope of service by setting the goal of life beyond life and pointing to the consummation of its labour in some remote Otherwhere. If it has imbibed something of the modern spirit of social service, it uses it, not in the spiritual, but in the mental way and makes a queer amalgam of Western humanism and spiritual ministrations. But its call is invariably for the Beyond, away from Matter to the peace and silence of the Spirit.

But the fulfilment of the material life does not lie in its progressive self-

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abolition in the supracosmic Light, but in its increasing incorporation and revelation of that Light. Matter has as much right to union with the Divine as our soul, and if the modern age has any mission to accomplish, it is the mission of the perfection and fulfilment of the entire life of man in the Divine. The sanctity and divine significance of life are becoming clearer to the consciousness of the elite of mankind and the present chaotic state of society is giving an additional edge to their inner aspiration. It is felt more and more that the soul of man has come down into the material world not to awake to its error and beat a precipitate retreat; but to fulfil the Will of God to self-manifestation in the conditions of the material existence. Born soldiers of the Light, the pioneers of the new spirituality are averse to flight from the battle-field of the world and totally indifferent to their personal salvation. They are vowed to bridge the gulf between the life of man and the Light of God, and transform the former into a channel of the latter. Their work is not humanitarian or philanthropic service of man, as it is commonly conceived by the human mind, but the fulfilment of the Will of God and the manifestation of His Light and Love in the material world. Their activities spring not from sattwic human feelings, but from their conscious union with God, from the embrace of their will with the divine Will; and they do not point to any fulfilment beyond, but to a divine perfection here and now, *ihaiva*. The world exists, according to them, as a manifold self-expression of Sachchidananda, and not as a spring-board for an irrevocable plunge into the featureless Unknown.

This dynamic spirituality will include in its scope all the activities of life, cultural, intellectual, political, economic, commercial, industrial etc., not certainly in their present impure and imperfect forms and not for their own sake, but as transformed media for the outpouring of the divine plenitude. It will temper them in its own fire and forge them anew, so that they may become transparent outlets for the creative energies of the Divine in man. The primary aim of this revolutionary spirituality will be the realisation of the integral Divine, the omnipresent Reality, and the ultimate aim the manifestation of that Reality in all the walks and aspects of human life.

It might appear to many that this new ideal was only a spiritualisation of the Western gospel of pragmatism; but a deeper vision would reveal that pragmatism or activism would only be an outward expression of the new spirituality and not its essence or base. The base of this spirituality will be, as I have already suggested, a constant and integral union with the divine Reality, and its self-expression in the works of human life will be a perennial

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outpouring of the glory and ecstasy of that union. Action will surge out of a supreme inner silence and move in the unfaltering steps of the supreme Light. Not the ideas of the human mind, however exalted they may be, but the Will of the Divine will be the single source of all our action.

The new spirituality may also appear at first sight to be conterminous with the karmayoga of the Gita; but, here again, a maturer vision will reveal that the Gita's gospel of works, as it is currently understood, can be only the starting point or the initial stage of its growth and development, but not its perfect flowering. Disinterestedness, which is an indispensable condition of the karmayoga of the Gita, will eventually pass into a divine interest,—the interest which the Divine feels in His own works in the world. Disinterestedness is a state of consciousness in which all egoistic individual interests have ceased; it is a negative state of the soul's freedom from all desires and preferences. But the Divine is not only disinterested—He has an inexhaustible divine interest in all His works, an eternal Will to delight which is at the origin of creation. The followers of the new spirituality will also feel the same divine interest in all the activities of life. Their union with the Divine being integral and inviolable, they will participate in His unebbing delight in all movements of the world.

The modern concepts of socialism, democracy, communism, syndicalism, will pale into insignificance before the ideal of spiritual liberty, equality and fraternity to be realised by mankind in the future. It is the Spirit alone that is one in all and imperishable; the other components of our being—our bodies, lives and minds—are separate from those of others and perishable. If unity is to be established in human society—it seems to be the most insistent demand of the modern age, in spite of all clashes and conflicts that disfigure it—it must radiate from the depths of our being outwards. It has first to be realised where it is eternally present, in our inmost spirit, and then to be infused into our mutable personality. The examples of the spiritual leaders like the Buddha and the Christ are enough to prove that it was not any socialistic or communistic principles of outer living that had made them equal to all men and selfless benefactors of humanity, but the love of their heart, the limitless love born of divine realisation, of the realisation of the essential oneness of all existence. Their conduct was not regulated by any political, social or ethical rules, but was only a spontaneous outflowing of their soul's plenitude, a tranquil and beatific expression of their union with the Infinite and Eternal. No ideology of the modern times, even if fully put into practice, can bring about the liberty and the equality, let

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alone fraternity, so longed-for by the progressive mind of humanity. It is time we awoke to the truth that on the material plane of life, liberty and equality are contradictory concepts. We see it already exemplified in the growing tendency of egalitarianism to immolate individual liberty at the altar of a mechanically devised economic equality. But if the individual is denied his legitimate freedom, he strives to recover it in a devious and aggressive way under cover of a socialistic or egalitarian regime—and that is totalitarianism, dictatorship in an apparent set-up of democracy. Where individual liberty is suppressed for the sake of equality, equality tends to harden into a soulless uniformity, a sterile regimentation of the collective life steam-rollered into a superficial sameness. Neither liberty nor equality nor fraternity can be established in human society till the essential unity of existence is realised in the Self or Spirit that is one in all.

If, then, the ideals of the modern age are to be realised at all—their persistence in the teeth of a desperate opposition is a proof of their invincible vitality—it can be done only by means of a thorough-going, comprehensive, dynamic spiritual culture. A collective life, even as any individual spiritual life, lived in God, in the supreme Truth and Reality of all existence, and moved by the Will of God, will be a life of natural liberty, equality and, not only fraternity, but of love and inner identity. The Will of the Supreme Truth, of which our desires are but scattered splinters, darkened and distorted in our ignorance, will express itself, unhindered and undeflected, in the multiplying diversities of life; for, this Will in the world is not for self-extinction, but for a rich and manifold self-fulfilment. Already in India such a comprehensive, dynamic spirituality is rearing itself upon an extension of the ancient base of the Vedic culture, which aimed at the conquest and revelation of immortality in human life.¹ The ancient roots are there ever green with an indestructible vitality, and given the right care and, the proper season, will sprout and grow into a massive tree of unprecedented splendour.

The divine living to which the resurgent spirituality will lead humanity will be the living of the unveiled Divine in transformed men. It will be the supreme Truth-Consciousness initiating, directing and consummating the working of human nature. Peace, harmony, a happy concordance of thoughts

¹ ...Follow the shining thread spun out across the mid-world, protect the luminous paths built by the thought; weave an inviolate work, become the human being, create the divine race...Seers of truth are you, sharpen the shining spears with which you cut the way to that which is immortal; knowers of the secret planes, form them, the steps by which the gods attained to immortality.—Rig Veda

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and ideas, a spontaneous play of universal sympathy and goodwill and a helpful coordination of the creative efforts of mankind, will be some of the natural results of the divine life. This life will grow and spread out from within, washing away the greed, the lust for power, the selfish ambitions, the hatred and envy which characterise the animal-human life we live today. In commerce, in industry, in the very fields of life where the rapacious instincts of men clash and collide, there will be a smooth mutuality and interchange welling out of the consciousness of universal unity and making for a peaceful progress towards a greater and greater richness of a diversified existence. "A spiritualised society would live like its spiritual individuals, not in the ego, but in the Spirit, not as the collective ego, but as the collective soul. This freedom from the egoistic standpoint would be the first and most prominent characteristic. But the elimination of egoism would not be brought about, as it is now proposed to bring it about, by persuading or forcing the individual to immolate his personal will and aspirations and his precious and hard-won individuality to the collective will, aims and egoism of the society, driving him like a victim of ancient sacrifice to slay his soul on the altar of that huge and shapeless idol. For that would be only the sacrifice of the smaller to the larger egoism; larger only in bulk not necessarily greater in quality or wider or nobler....It is said in the old Indian writings that while in the second age, the age of Power, Vishnu descends in the King, and in the third, the age of balance, as the legislator or codifier, in the age of the Truth he descends as Yajna, that is to say, as the Master of works manifest in the heart of His creatures. It is this kingdom of God within, the result of finding of God not in a distant heaven but within ourselves, of which the state of society in an age of the Truth, spiritual age, would be the result and the external figure.

"Therefore a society which was even initially spiritualised, would make the revealing and finding of the divine Self in man the whole first aim of all its activities, its education, its knowledge, its science, its ethics, its arts, its economical and political structure.... It would pursue physical and psychical science not in order merely to know the world and Nature in her processes and to use them for material human ends, but to know through and in and under and over all things the Divine in the world and the ways of the Spirit in its masks and behind them....It would make it the aim of Art not merely to present images of the subjective and objective world, but to see them with the significant and creative vision that goes behind their appearances and to reveal the Truth and Beauty of which things visible

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to us and invisible are the forms, the masks or the symbols and significant figures....In its politics...it would regard the peoples as group souls meant like the individual to grow according to their own nature and by that growth to help each other, to help the whole race in the one common work of humanity. And that work would be to find the divine Self in the individual and the collectivity and to realise spiritually, mentally, vitally, materially its greatest, largest, richest and deepest possibilities in the inner life of all and their outer action and nature."¹

This all-embracing, dynamic spirituality, enabling men to live in the eternal Truth and Reality of their existence, is the vision that is rising before us in India today. India has survived the ravages of Time and many a brutal assault of circumstances only to bring to humanity this inspiring message of the divine life on earth. This is, as Mr. Munshi would say, India's mission in history. Her greatest contribution to human culture is, not the gospel of personal salvation, but a definite path, a synthetic, integral Yoga, leading to a divine perfection and fulfilment of mankind on earth. She will reveal God in man and in his culture and civilisation. She will flood human society with God's Light and refound it on God's peace and harmony. She will raise man from his blundering mind into the solar splendour of the Truth-Consciousness and fulfil his evolutionary destiny. It is for this that India has lived and laboured through the centuries, in the light and in the night. She has lived for God in man.

RISHABHCHAND.

¹ *The Human Cycle* by Sri Aurobindo

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(A Synopsis—Continued from the last issue)

CHAPTER VI

MAN IN THE UNIVERSE

The progressive emergence of a luminous Reality in the world-existence itself is the graded steps envisaged by the awakening consciousness in man.

The ancient Truth of the infinite Bliss-Existence-Consciousness (Sachchidananda) the same everywhere,—within, behind and beyond all phenomena,—only reveals itself, since it is involved in the world, to an evolving individual consciousness opening to that Truth.

Vedanta is a knowledge founded on the realisation of Sachchidananda—the threefold Reality of the Supreme. It is the ancient truth of the eternal Trinity, the Three in One. While the concept of the duality merely opens us to the plurality or universal reality, the triple concept of the supreme Oneness opens us to the three-fold relation of the individual, the universe and the transcendent; and on this relation man's earthly existence hinges.

The universe and the individual are the two essential appearances into which the supreme and transcendent Reality has descended; and this movement was a progressive self-concealing. The discovery of the Supreme by the individual is the ascent, by the same path, but by a progressive revelation or unveiling of that which had become involved. Above the terms of Life and Mind man may thus discover Supermind,—the key to the cosmic harmony.

The universe is a diffusion of the divine All in infinite Space and Time, while the individual is its concentration within the limits of Space and Time. It is only through the ascent in consciousness of the concentrated centres (of individuals) that the extensive plurality of the universe can manifest the original Oneness. But by this ascent the individual does not thereby lose his true individuality.

Man, of all terrestrial beings, has become conscious of the life-energy, and likewise through a progressive self-knowledge may become fully conscious of mind-energy, and hence of that which is beyond mind.

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Man's first glimpses of that higher Reality beyond his mentality reveal to him his own limitation, when he is faced with the vastness of the Beyond; and he feels the division in his own existence and in himself. The limitation is in fact the realisation—not of any permanent separation or division in Reality itself—but the condition of man's present incomplete state of being. And hence the realisation of the true Wholeness into which he has to grow comes to him.

It is a process of transmutation (not of purgation) by which Heaven and Earth and the bliss of the Supreme can be joined in the earthly consciousness. The key to the universal unity is the essential Oneness of Reality; and the discovery of this truth lies within man himself.

CHAPTER VII

THE EGO AND THE DUALITIES

By basing our initial conception of Reality on the truth of the triple Nature of the Divine (Sachchidananda) we overcome the impasse of that duality which has hypnotised man's thought and kept him bound to either an exclusive oneness, or a wavering uncertainty.

All is one Reality, but it is only by overcoming the Ignorance or Unknowing, by the ascent through mind, that man can attain to that Truth. The fact that man is conscious of the Ignorance and at the same time glimpses a higher Knowledge, only indicates his own divided being and incompleteness. This condition of division or duality has been symbolised in the 'fall of man', which represents his separation from the divine Oneness, and hence his exclusive experience of the dualities of the world Ignorance. The discovery of the triple relation of the Divine, through man's transcendence of the Ignorance, is a truth that is valid not only in the transcendent experience itself, but also in the universality and above all in the individual; and hence it is a decisive step in man's advance.

Man is obliged to begin from the individual experience, and strive to realise the universal totality beyond his present limited consciousness. The necessary basis of enlargement of consciousness is man's present mentality, his dualistic sense-mind; for the sense-mind is man's link with the realities of the earth-life, which have to be met as equally as the realities beyond. Thus it is important in shifting our egoistic outlook to that of the Divine

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Consciousness, that we have the adequate support of a reasoned and effective Knowledge, in which the egoistic life will rediscover all its values transformed and corrected.

First we have to see the truth that life itself is not bound to our present egoistic evaluations. For man to see that higher truth, he has to grow towards it in mental perception, and thus awaken latent faculties of higher consciousness in himself.

In our pursuit of knowledge (by the reasoning process of discovering truth through the elimination of error), many questions, doubts and uncertainties assail the mind, and have to be met. Science is in fact moving in this path of eliminating error, but yet the true *cause* of things escapes man's grasp.

The true cause and hence the true root-knowledge lies in the Reality that the Supreme (the Absolute or Brahman) is the one universal and essential fact, and that its Nature is a three-fold Reality (Sachchidananda). From this Divine-centred relation we can build a new foundation of knowledge, based on the truth that life itself is centred in an immortal existence; that emotion has its origin in a self-existent delight in being; that thought is centred in an all-pervading truth; and that all activity is rooted in a self-effecting good.

All this play and movement of the universe is embodied in a multiplicity of forms, or individual centres, from which the ego—a self-limitation of consciousness—has arisen. But the ego is a transitory formation, an intermediate representation of something beyond itself,—that is, the divine Conscious Being.

Through a progressive evolution the limited ego can eventually become transformed into a conscious centre of the divine unity.

CHAPTER VIII

THE METHODS OF VEDANTIC KNOWLEDGE

The senses give us knowledge only of the physical world. To extend the boundaries of knowledge we have to extend the instruments of knowledge, the first of which is pure Reason.

Reason may be either mixed or pure. Its action is mixed when it depends wholly on the evidence of the senses. Its pure action takes sensible experience only as a starting-point in order to arrive at concepts that stand behind or even beyond appearances.

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Pure reason has to correct the errors of the sense-mind. By this path we reach from physical to metaphysical knowledge. But metaphysical knowledge is not sufficient in itself, unless it can become an actual experience that has entered into man's psychological nature.

The senses are merely organs of the sense-mind. And the sense-mind itself can act without the instrumentality of the organs of sense. This pure action of the sense-mind gives us a direct or subjective perception, which is the basis of a knowledge by identity.

Perception by the physical organs of sense is indirect only so long as the ego upholds the limitation and the separation of experience into subjective and objective. But because the ego-limitation is not fixed, we can surpass this separation and reach the true intuitive knowledge. First we have to see the potentiality of mind itself as an instrument of knowledge apart from the physical instruments.

Thus the action of the senses is merely a means—a starting-point—through which the mind can establish contact; for it is ultimately the mind that perceives. The mind can therefore be trained to use inner senses of perception, and to perceive the thoughts or feelings of others without aid from their utterance, gesture, or action (as in telepathy). This, however, only widens our field but does not yet lead us to the truth beyond the sense.

The Vedantic solution states that knowledge should be based on Intuition, which is an extension of knowledge by identity, through self-awareness. Through a widening of the individual self one attains the knowledge of the All-Self. By this means we can reach beyond mind and the reason, which are intermediary stages in the ascent of Consciousness.

We see that Intuition, working as instinct, is inherent though concealed in Life, and it is also the true basis of human thought. But Intuition only manifests its true nature in the superconscious where Light is the law. Here mind and reason then act as true intermediaries, liberating knowledge out of its concealed state and leading it towards its true self-luminous manifestation.

The great truths of Vedanta, based on this intuitional approach to knowledge, may be summarised as follows:

In the universe the ultimate Reality is Brahman, perceived as pure, indefinable, infinite Existence,—that is, the All-Existent. This is an experience beyond sense-perception, which comes to us as a ray or luminous intimation through intuition. These brilliant messages are the beginnings of man's higher knowledge.

The three great declarations of the Upanishads (I am He; Thou art That;

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and All this is the Brahman), condenses this highest experience of Reality. The first indicates the experience of the individual identity with the Supreme; the second the identity with the Supreme through the multiplicity; and the third expresses the realisation of the Allness of the Supreme.

Pure reason as an established faculty in man, if it can be guided by intuitive thought, can raise man's faculties to that higher consciousness of which the early revelations of the mystics and sages were but an opening, a message from the superconscient, as well as a ladder by which man is able to climb through his own evolutionary progression, to bring the Divine into this earthly life.

CHAPTER IX

THE PURE EXISTENT

When we look upon the world dispassionately, apart from our egoistic preoccupation, we perceive a boundless Energy in limitless Space and eternal Time.

Although we see that this infinite existence has its own gigantic aims and formidable standards against the pettiness of our own, yet at the same time we are shown (and Science confirms) that this mighty Energy is the equal and impartial Mother of existence. But when we speak of equal here we do not mean a weighed quantity, or an assessed and uniform quality, as our relative intellect dictates.

If we look beyond the intellect, and are guided by an intuitive knowledge by identity, we shall see that the Consciousness of this infinite Energy is other than our mental consciousness. It is indivisible and gives, not an equal part of itself, but its whole self at one and the same time to the largest agglomeration as well as to the minutest particle. All is Brahman, or the Absolute, and each thing is That in essence.

But though the infinite Energy is the same in all, the form and movement and result of its force, vary infinitely in each.

The difficulty of our seeing this infinite differentiation of the indivisible One, has sprung from an original ignorance that is rooted in our own ego-centric view of the world. Our present knowledge of the world is in fact based on this original error.

First we have to recognise that the appearances we see around us are

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only a partial movement of this infinite movement. Thus we have to know this infinite and omnipotent Energy as the central factor.

But to know the movement of the Energy we have to know its centre, the immutable Stability which is the pure Existence and Origin of all movement; since the movement itself gives us no clue regarding its inexhaustible source.

The difficulty for mental perception is to see both Time and Space, as well as Timelessness and Spacelessness together, as real aspects of the Absolute. To overcome this difficulty we have to see the infinite and indefinable Absolute as only partly knowable by us. For there is a vast field that is as yet unknowable, which seems to oppose and even contradict our phenomenal existence.

All that vast Beyond which is as yet Transcendent to us surpasses the bounds of conceptual language. We can only call it the ineffable and the immutable.

The emergence of movement from the Immutable is an eternal phenomenon. But immersed in the flow of Time we can only perceive this movement—following the dictates of our reason—as a cycle, a recurrent beginning, middle, and end. Or if we follow an inner intuitive experience we perceive an eternity of successive duration. We then have the false opposition between an experience resting on pure reason and that following an intuition that has fixed itself solely on the becoming as the whole reality.

The conflict is only resolved by detaching ourselves from the movement—that is, discovering that in ourselves which is not involved in the becoming; and thereby we experience the reality of the pure existence, the absolute Stability.

This deeper experience of intuition confirms the higher experience of pure Reason; namely, that there are two fundamental facts, that of pure existence and that of world-existence, a fact of Being, and a fact of Becoming, where Being is the pure Existent and Becoming the Conscious Force.

CHAPTER X

CONSCIOUS FORCE

The phenomenal existence arising out of the immutable Stillness resolves itself in the universe into a Force, or movement of energy, that manifests itself in forms and grades of substance.

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Of these grades Matter is the most easily intelligible to our mental consciousness. The ancient view considered Matter in its five elementary states. These are: pure space, which we recognise through sound; the aerial state, which we recognise by touch; light and heat, which are apparent to us through sight, as well as touch; the liquid state, which is apparent to us through taste; and finally the solid state, which is apparent to us through smell, and the other senses.

But this ancient theory did not explain how the universal vibrations of Force could give rise to conscious sensations in us. The old theory (of the Sankhyas), only stated that behind these five material elements were two non-material principles, the cosmic principle of Force (Mahat) and the principle of Ego-formation (Ahankara). These two principles (together with the principle of intelligence) only become active through the intermediary of a Conscious-Soul. This latter, though itself inactive, reflects its consciousness into these principles of Force, division and intelligence, which thence become active principles.

One fundamental fact, on which both the old theories and modern science agree, is that Nature is a Force,—a formative movement of energies. With this as our fundamental standpoint we have to see further that this Force is yet inherent and ever-persent in the universal origin of the all things, the immutable stability. For out of the immutable Existence the phenomenal worlds have issued as a continuous chain or recurrent cycle.

This, however, only explains the how of the process, but does not explain the unanswered why. Why should the concentrated, self-existent Force—in its Origin—diffuse itself in an infinite variation and extensivity? We can only answer this if we accept Existence itself as Conscious Being.

Here it is necessary to note what we mean by Consciousness. This is not the mental waking consciousness of the individual, but a vaster subliminal consciousness beyond the instrumentality of body and sense.

From this point of view we begin to see that consciousness has itself many grades, extending from the inert subconsciousness in matter and the lower forms of life, to the Conscious Soul (or Purusha) in the individual being, that never sleeps.

A distinction should be noted between the subconsciousness and the subliminal consciousness. The subconscious is that which is as yet involved, and has not yet opened in the evolutionary ascent. The subliminal belongs to a vaster universal range of consciousness, beyond the individual though

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connected with him, by which man can raise himself above his present mentality.

The existence of different grades of consciousness is apparent to us in our own physical life. Thus in our own body we know that a vital consciousness functions in the cells apart from the mind. We can observe this vital consciousness in the animal, as well as more subtly in the plant, and we see that it is the foundation of all the movements and reactions of the living organism.

Likewise the existence of a material consciousness in inert matter, which is different in function though continuous with the vital consciousness, cannot long be overlooked by modern thought. Such discovery of the existence of Consciousness in all forms of Force at work in the world, must necessarily change and widen our conception of the word consciousness.

This wider view of consciousness comes closer to the ancient Indian conception of Chit, which as energy creates the worlds and the different grades of substance.

The more we become aware of the minute workings of Nature the more do we see a purposefulness and self-knowledge at work therein. But when we look at Nature as a whole we are inclined at first to see only a chaotic and irrational working. Yet a wider and deeper view convinces us that in all forms of Force, whether physical or seemingly irrational, there is a Consciousness. The Force that builds the worlds is a Conscious Force, just as Existence which progressively manifests therein is Conscious Being.

CHAPTER XI

DELIGHT OF EXISTENCE: THE PROBLEM

By viewing the Absolute (Brahman) in the two phases of Conscious Being and Conscious Force, we do not yet answer the question *why* the infinite perfection should create worlds of forms in its own substance by a force of consciousness. Since the Absolute is eternally free, the only reason for the creation can be the expression of what the Vedantins called Bliss or Delight.

The Absolute is everywhere—in the universe as equally as beyond it—the triple indivisible composite of Being, Consciousness with Force, and Delight of being, (Sachchidananda). The fact that man does not yet experience this integral truth is an indication of his own incompleteness.

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Two powerful contradictions in the human mind stand against man's realisation of this Divine delight of existence. These are the emotional reaction of pain, and the ethical problem of evil.

Because pain is an intense feeling to man, it looms larger in his experience than the greater sum of joy inherent in existence. But pain is more intense precisely because it is abnormal—an obstruction even—to our natural being and existence.

The real problem is why suffering exists at all in a world that has issued from, and is occupied by, Sachchidananda.

First we have to realise that God is not separate from evil and suffering, but that He Himself, embodied in all things, bears the evil and the suffering.

Secondly we have to see that what we call evil and suffering, and their opposites good and love, spring from our own dualistic and divided conception of things. Thus we have to see how the problem appears in its original purity, on the basis of unity manifesting as multiplicity. That is, we have to see how the Perfection can admit that which is not perfection.

Our ethical view is necessarily limited to the human standpoint, based as it is on man's emotional reactions. Both material Nature and the animal or vital Nature are non-ethical. Ethics is an intermediary, though necessary, stage in the evolution. It is the means whereby humanity struggles out of a lower harmony, broken up by individual discord in life, towards a higher harmony based on the consciousness of our oneness with all existence.

It is while man is absorbed in this intermediary stage—where the original Perfection of Sachchidananda is seemingly obscured from him—that he experiences the pain and suffering which contradict that Perfection.

First we have to realise that just as the universal Consciousness is vaster than man's present mental consciousness, so the universal Delight of the Divine Nature (that is, of Sachchidananda) is far wider than the individual's ordinary emotional and sensational feeling of joy and pleasure. Delight of being is universal, illimitable, and self-existent. Our emotional pleasure and its opposite pain are as yet a half-formed and divided expression of that pure Delight which is obscured by our present ignorance and egoism.

CHAPTER XII

DELIGHT OF EXISTENCE: THE SOLUTION

We have realised that the Absolute (which is also the secret self of all

THE LIFE DIVINE—A SYNOPSIS

things) is an infinite indivisible existence. The essential Nature or Power of this Existence is an infinite Conscious Force, as well as an infinite conscious Delight of being.

We have discovered that Consciousness is hidden in the inconscience and the subconscious; so is Delight (inseparable from Consciousness) present though hidden therein also. In inconscient Matter, Delight expresses itself in the imperishability of material substance; in subconscious life it expresses itself as the instinct of self-preservation; in the half-conscious mentality it appears in a growing sense of immortality; and in the enlightened consciousness it is seen to be at the very root of existence—the Ananda of the ancients.

It is when we see the three inseparable aspects of the Supreme with our divided consciousness that we lose the true Wholeness of Reality. Thus by considering only the pure Existence as real, the world itself becomes an illusion, a Maya.¹ Similarly by considering Consciousness and Force as the sole reality we see only the dual play of Nature and Spirit opposed to each other.

When we see world-existence as essentially a self-delight of being we have the key to the reconciliation of these diverse and conflicting views. Force itself is a creative Consciousness whose movement is the play of infinite Delight of being.

The solution lies in seeing the triune view of the universe as that integral Unity which is both the one indivisible Conscious Being behind all our experiences, as well as the conscious Being in us, our innermost self.

We have to see the vaster, profounder Consciousness—the superconscient—behind the superficial experience of our surface awareness, which is dependent on that. To live in those depths is to be directly aware of the profound calm and joyous presence which is the source of our being and of all things.

But the greater conquest comes when the surface being itself responds directly to this vast Bliss-Self, which can then convert the imperfection into true and perfect values.

The important step is that the mental being must change the habits of the nervous reactions themselves; so that one becomes master of one's responses

¹ In this respect we should note that the Sanscrit word Maya has undergone a significant change. Originally it has a creative or formative meaning, an all-embracing power in its cosmic activity; but later the term came to denote the creator (or creatrix) of illusion, and hence the symbol of illusion.

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to the contacts of the world. This results in the true possession of freedom by the mental being, and must be achieved as a natural development by the aid of one's will.

Pain is a danger signal for the individual, to which he instinctively reacts for his own preservation. It is necessary so long as the individual is a limited entity exposed to the shocks of multitudinous forces. Nevertheless it is a transitional phase out of which the mind of man can grow, when the soul can bring the true essence or taste (as 'rasa') to his consciousness.

Art and poetry are aids to man in breaking from egoistic sensation and experiencing the universal delight in things. This is a step towards the universalised outlook, when detachment is combined with a sympathy with all things in our emotional being.

The first step in the soul's self-discipline towards the shocks of existence is to face them with a calm neutrality. The aim must be the possession of an all-pervading, equal delight. Thus may the individual eventually reproduce in his whole nature the unity, the harmony, the oneness-in-all of the supreme Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

N. PEARSON.

THE HUMAN CYCLE

(*An Abridgement*)

CHAPTER VIII

CIVILISATION AND BARBARISM

Once we have determined that this rule of perfect individuality and perfect reciprocity is the ideal law for the individual, the community and the race, we have to try to see more clearly what we mean when we say that self-realisation is the sense, secret or overt, of individual and social development. The Self of man is a thing hidden and occult, it is not his body, his life, not even his mind. Therefore neither the fullness of his physical, vital nor his mental nature can be either the last term or the true standard of his self-realisation. The time is passing away, permanently—let us hope—for this cycle of civilisation, when the entire identification of the self with the body and the physical life was possible, the primary characteristic of complete barbarism. The stress of modern civilisation is changing the vital attitude. Moreover, the message 'Educate thyself' is universally accepted. This is, in essence, a return to and a larger development of the old Hellenic ideal, with a greater stress on capacity and utility and a very diminished stress on beauty and refinement. The old Hellenic or Graeco-Roman civilisation perished, among other reasons, because it only imperfectly generalised culture in its own society and was surrounded by huge masses of humanity who were still possessed by the barbarian habit of mind. The modern world does not leave room for a repetition of the danger in the old form or on the old scale. Science is there to prevent it. It has armed the civilised races with weapons of organisation and aggression and self-defence which cannot be successfully utilised by any barbarous people, unless it ceases to be uncivilised and acquires the knowledge which Science alone can give. It is true that the first tendencies of Science have been materialistic, but whatever its apparent tendencies, it has been really an assertion of man the mental being and the supremacy of intelligence. But if Science has thus prepared us for an age of wider and deeper culture, it has en-

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couraged more or less indirectly both by its attitude to life and its discoveries another kind of barbarism, that of the industrial, the commercial, the economic age which is now progressing to its culmination and its close. The essential barbarism of this is its pursuit of vital success, satisfaction, convenience for their own sake. The vital part of the being is an element in the integral human existence as much as the physical part; it has its place but must not exceed its place. Therefore in a commercial age with its ideal, vulgar and barbarous, the soul of man may linger for a while for certain gains and experiences, but cannot permanently rest.

CHAPTER IX

CIVILISATION AND CULTURE

Nature starts from Matter, develops out of it its hidden life, releases out of involution in life all the crude material of Mind and, when she is ready, turns Mind upon itself and upon Life and Matter in a great mental effort to understand all three. It is only at this fourth stage of her progress that she arrives at humanity. It would seem at first sight that since man is pre-eminently the mental being, the development of the mental faculties and the richness of the mental life should be his highest aim. But here there is a double motive of Nature: man is here to learn from her how to control and create, not only his own inner existence, his own mentality, but also to control and recreate correspondingly his environment. And then there comes the question whether he is not intended not only to expand inwardly and outwardly, but to grow upward. We must recognise both his need of integrality and his impulse of self-exceeding if we would fix rightly the meaning of his individual existence and the perfect aim and norm of his society. The pursuit of mental life for its own sake is what we mean by culture; but the word is still a little equivocal. There is in our mental existence a lower and fundamental stratum, nearest to the vital in the scale of evolution. Above this is the intellectual being, but the rational intellect and the rational will are not the whole of it. There enters into it a deeper, more intuitive, more splendid and powerful, but much less clear, much less developed and as yet hardly at all self-possessing light and force for which we have not even a name.

The very complexity of his mental being is man's great embarrassment. His reason is a judge who gives conflicting verdicts. Still in the midst of it all he has formed certain large ideas of culture and the mental life and shaped

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into a general system of curves his many attempts to arrive either at an exclusive standard or an integral harmony. We must fix upon this distinction that barbarism is that state of society in which man is almost entirely pre-occupied with his life and body, his economic and physical existence, and has few means and little inclination to develop his mentality, while civilisation is the more developed state of society in which to a sufficient social and economic organisation is added the activity of the mental life in most if not all of its parts. But in a civilised society there is still the distinction between the partially, crudely, conventionally civilised and the cultured. The last generation drew emphatically the distinction between the cultured man and the Philistine. Roughly, the Philistine is the average sensational man who lives outwardly the civilised life, he is in fact the modern civilised barbarian. The Philistine is not dead, but he no longer reigns and has been replaced by the modern giant reading public. It is his coming which has been the precipitative agent for the reshaping of the modern world. The result has been to cheapen thought and art and literature. The higher mental life has been democratised, sensationalised, activised, with both good and bad results. Through it all the eye of faith can see perhaps that a crude but enormous change has begun, which will create perhaps one day the as yet unknown phenomenon, a race of men—not only a class—who have to some extent found and developed their mental selves, a cultured humanity.

CHAPTER X

AESTHETIC AND ETHICAL CULTURE

The idea of culture begins to define itself a little more clearly, or at least it has put away from it in a clear contrast its natural opposites. Not to live principally in the activities of the sense-mind, but in the activities of knowledge and reason and a wide intellectual curiosity, the activities of the enlightened will which make for character and high ethical ideals and a large human action, not to be governed by our lower or our average mentality but by truth and beauty and by the self-ruling will is the ideal of a true culture and the beginning of an accomplished humanity. But still on this higher plane we are apt to be pursued by old exclusivenesses and misunderstandings—the frequent quarrel between culture and conduct, between Hebraism and Hellenism. The source of the conflict arises from the triangular disposi-

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tion of the higher or more subtle mentality: a side of will, conduct, character which creates the ethical man, and another side of sensibility to the beautiful which creates the aesthetic man, looking askance at each other with mutual distrust or even reprobation. Society is only an enlargement of the individual and the contrast and opposition reproduces itself in social and national types. The best examples of the ethical mind will, however, be found not in the middle-class puritanism nor of the aesthetic mind in Bohemian society. We have to go further back and contrast rather Republican Rome or Sparta with Periclean Athens. Republican Rome presents itself as an almost unique experiment in high will and strong character-building divorced from sweetness and light. Early Rome and Sparta were barren of thought, art, poetry, literature, the larger mental life. The end of these purely ethical cultures bears witness to their insufficiency. On the other hand we are tempted to give the name of a full culture to all those periods and civilisations which have encouraged a freely human development and like ancient Athens have concentrated on beauty and the delight of living. There were in the Athenian development two distinct periods, one of art and beauty and one of thought. But without character, without some kind of high and strong discipline there is no enduring power of life. It could only think, it could not successfully practice. The insufficiency of the aesthetic view of life becomes yet more evident when we come down to the other great example, Italy of the Renaissance, when aesthetic culture was divorced from the ethical impulse. The subsequent prostration and loose weakness of Italy was the inevitable result of the great defect of its period of fine culture, for if the ethical impulse is not sufficient by itself for the development of the human being, yet are will, character, self-discipline, self-mastery indispensable to that development. Neither the ethical being nor the aesthetic being is the whole man, nor can either be his sovereign principle. They must be taken up and enlightened by a higher principle capable of understanding both equally, their purposes and potentialities. That higher principle seems to be provided for us by the human faculty of reason and intelligent will.

CHAPTER XI

THE REASON AS GOVERNOR OF LIFE

Reason using the intelligent will for the ordering of the inner and the outer life is undoubtedly the highest developed faculty of man at his present

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point of evolution. The instinct of man when he finds his manhood is to seek after a rule of life, to be master of his nature and free. No doubt all is work of Nature and this too is Nature, but still it is a second kind of Nature: a stage of being in Nature becomes self-conscious in the individual, turns its consciousness upon itself. That turning of the consciousness upon itself and on things, which man represents has been the great crisis, a prolonged and developing crisis, in the terrestrial evolution of the soul in Nature. The intellectual reason though not man's only means of knowledge has this advantage over others that it can disengage itself from the work, stand back from it to study and understand it disinterestedly. Therefore is reason science, conscious art, invention. It is observation and can seize and arrange truth of facts; it is speculation and can extricate and forecast truth of possibility. Recently, however, there has been a very noticeable revolt against the sovereignty of the intellect, the thinking mind of the race has become more disposed to question itself, to ask whether existence is not too large, profound, complex and mysterious a thing to be entirely seized and governed by the powers of the intellect. Vaguely it is felt that there is some greater godhead than the reason. The highest power of reason is the disinterested seeking after knowledge. If from the beginning we have only particular ends in view, then we limit our intellectual gain, limit our view of things. At the same time even as others are subject to the tyranny of interests, prejudices, instincts or passions, so the man who is capable of governing his life by ideas is subject to the tyranny of ideas. The ideas are to a certain extent fulfilled, they triumph for a time, but their very success brings disappointment and disillusionment; they themselves are often vitiated by compromises when they are not partial and insufficient. This is the cause why all human systems have failed in the end. But behind all this continuity of failure there has persisted a faith that the reason of man would end in triumphing over difficulties. This is seen especially in the efforts of modern Science and its claim to lay down finally all the true principle and the sufficient rule of process not only for all activities of Nature, but for all the activities of man. It has done great things, but it has not been in the end a success. The human mind is beginning to perceive that it has left the heart of every problem untouched and illumined only outsides and a certain range of processes. The whole difficulty of reason in trying to govern our existence is that because of its inherent limitations it can create either a series of more or less empirical compromises or else a series of arbitrary and practically inapplicable or partially applicable sys-

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tems. It is of course possible to limit the use of reason to an immediate, an apparent vital and physical practicality, but in this it cannot rest long satisfied. For his nature pushes him towards the heights, to things yet unachieved and even immediately impossible. But when it attempts this higher action reason separates itself from life. The idealist, the thinker, the philosopher, the poet and artist, even the moralist, all those who live much in ideas, when they come to grapple at close quarters with practical life, seem to find themselves somewhat at a loss and are constantly defeated in their endeavour to govern life by their ideas. Reduce your ideal to a system and it at once begins to fail. The root of the difficulty is that at the very basis of all our life and existence, internal and external, there is something on which the intellect can never lay a controlling hand, the Absolute, the Infinite. It is because this is the reality of our existence that the intellectual reason and the intelligent will cannot deal with life as its sovereign, even though they may be at present our supreme instruments and may have been in our evolution supremely important and helpful. The real sovereign is another than the rational intelligence. Man's impulse to be free, master of Nature, in himself and his environment, cannot be really fulfilled until his self-consciousness has grown beyond the rational mentality, become aware of the true sovereign and either identified itself with him or entered into constant communion with his supreme will and knowledge.

CHAPTER XII

THE OFFICE AND LIMITATION OF THE REASON

The reason cannot give the perfect law of our being, the rational or intellectual man is not the last and highest ideal of manhood, nor a rational society the last and highest perfection of an aggregate human life. Meanwhile the reason performs its function, takes man to the gates of a greater self-consciousness, correcting each lower member from its self-absorbed action. It also tries to fix rules, but this soon becomes a force for limitation and then it has to bring in its own saving faculty of doubt.

But the action of the intelligence is not only turned downward and outward, it has an upward and inward eye. It is opened in this power of vision to a Truth above it, only the forms we give it are intellectual, they themselves descend from a plane of truth of being where knowledge and force are one.

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Unfortunately, when intellectually stated these become conflicting ideals. As it is, the individual and social progress proceeds by bringing out numberless possibilities, by creation of different types, by a constant swinging backward and forward between the various possibilities and the different elements to be harmonised, of each of them divided against itself,—and each and all of these corresponding to some truth of his social being, some need of his complex social nature.

The subjective view of human life gives us a truer vision of the place of the intellect in the human movement. The intellect has a double working: the one is a disinterested pursuit of truth for the sake of Truth and the other is coloured by the passion for practice. It is precisely in the putting of knowledge at the service of life that it falls into confusion and imperfection, first, because it thus becomes the servant of something other than pure truth and, secondly, the moment ideas are applied to life they become the plaything of forces over which the reason has little control. Science and idealistic philosophy, no less than organised religion, with their opposite results and uses are there to prove it. The truth is that upon which we are now insisting, that reason can in its nature be used and has always been used to justify any idea, theory of life, system of society or government, ideal of individual or collective action, or any combination of these ideas, to which the mind of man attaches itself for the moment or through centuries.

This truth is hidden from the rationalist because he is supported by two constant articles of faith, first that his own reason is right and the reason of others who differ from him is wrong and, secondly, that whatever may be the present deficiencies of the human intellect, the collective human reason will eventually be able to found thought and life securely on a clear satisfying basis. Both are errors and yet contain a truth. The reason cannot grasp all truth in its embrace, but still it does grasp the something of it which we immediately need, and its insufficiency does not detract from its value; its inconstancy, its divisibility against itself, its power of sustaining opposite views are rather the whole secret of its value. Also, though reason cannot found a perfect life for man or for society, it can by constant enlargement, purification, openness arrive at an intelligent sense even of that which is hidden from it, till, its limits reached, it can say to man: "There is a Soul, a Self, a God in the world and in man who works concealed and all is his self-concealing and self-unfolding. Remove the veil between you and him: then you will know yourself, become the possessor or at least

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the receiver and instrument of a higher will and knowledge than mine, and lay hold at last on the true secret and the whole sense of a human and yet divine living."

CHAPTER XIII

REASON AND RELIGION

It would seem then that reason is an insufficient, often an inefficient guide for humanity in that great endeavour which is the real heart of human progress. If that is the truth, then neither the Hellenic nor the modern ideal can be either the highest or the wisest goal of social development. The Hellenic ideal was roughly expressed in the Latin maxim, a sound mind in a sound body, interpreting both ideas in a Greek sense. But both the Hellenic and the modern mind take it that man is partly a mental, partly a physical being with a mentalised physical life as his field and reason for his highest attribute and possibility. The most advanced tendency of a subjective age leads us back to a still more ancient truth. If this view is to be accepted, there must be a superior range of being with its own proper powers,—liberated soul-faculties or spiritual will and knowledge higher than the reason and intelligent will. Otherwise we turn back, as in the theory of ancient Indian culture, to a spiritualised typical society. But the typical principle cannot be the foundation of an ideal human society. It is in the intermediate ages that the principle of order takes refuge in a limited perfection, suppressing some elements to perfect others. We shall better understand what may be this higher being and those higher faculties, if we look again at the dealings of the reason with the suprarational and the infrarational in them, between which it stands as a mediator. Its limitations become very strikingly, very characteristically apparent when it is confronted with that great order of psychological truths and experiences which we have hitherto kept in the background—the religious being of man and his religious life. Faced with the phenomenon of religious life the reason is naturally apt to adopt one of two attitudes: either it views the whole thing as a mass of superstitions, a mystical nonsense or it labours to reject or correct its superstitions, crudities, both attitudes shallow in the extreme. The former attitude has on its positive side played a powerful part in the history of human thought, but its intolerant negations are an

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arrogant falsity. The inmost essence of religion, apart from its outward machinery, is the search for God and the finding of God. All this has nothing to do with the realm of reason or its normal activities. Its sole legitimate sphere is to explain as best it can, the truth, the experiences, the laws of our supraphysical and spiritual existence. That has been the work of spiritual philosophy in the East, of theology in the West, a work of great importance at moments like the present. In the infrarational sphere, however, the reason might seem justified in its work and entitled to assume a superior role. But to root out the infrarational from religion or to purge religion of any elements necessary for its completeness because its forms are defective or obscure, without having the power to illuminate them from above or within or without replacing them by more luminous symbols, is not to purify but to pauperise. But the relations of the spirit and reason need not be always hostile or without any point of contact. What is impossible or absurd to the unaided reason, becomes real and right to reason lifted beyond itself by the power of the spirit and irradiated by its light.

SISIR KUMAR GHOSH.

REVIEW

The White Umbrella: Indian Political Thought from Manu to Gandhi
By: D. Mackenzie Brown. University of California Press, Berkley 4, California.
Pp. xv+205, Price \$ 3.75.

Political Science in India has never been an independent subject of study and practice with its own norm and pragmatic basis as pursued elsewhere. It is an integral part of the total life-perspective that has governed Indian thought and living throughout its history. The Science of Polity, *Artha-sastra*, is really the Indian Ideal of Dharma—the Natural Law of Truth and Right—projected and applied in the field of socio-political relations of man with man in community. The organisation of society and the evolution of a system of government that would best ensure a coordinated progress of the individual and the collectivity towards a Goal of fulfilment through a multi-form graded order of life has been the main aim of Indian political Science. Modern students of the subject are apt to miss this central truth and either read in it their own ideas imbibed from their study of the political experiments in European and Mediterranean countries, or failing to grasp the true spirit behind the lines and forms of this Polity treat them as nothing more than the first crude attempts at political evolution among primitive peoples. The author of the present book, however, is a striking exception. His very choice of the title shows how deeply he has entered into the spirit of this aspect of Indian Culture and tradition. "Indian political thought", he writes "cannot be isolated from the main body of Hindu philosophy. In the West we have accepted a tradition, partly Machiavelian, of a science of government which rests upon its own empirical basis. But the great works of Indian Polity are...one facet of a vast and integrated system of reasoning which poses and interprets the very problem of human existence." (P. 6) Citing a happy passage from the Ramayana which describes the coronation of Sri Rama under the canopy of the *svetacchatra*, the White Umbrella, the author points out that though the *svetacchatra* is the ancient symbol of monarchical power,¹ "in a larger sense, the white umbrella symbolises the

¹ Dr. Brown's Note on the Umbrella is very interesting and well worth reproduction for the benefit of the reader:

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sovereign power of the world—the protective, sheltering Dharma or ‘Firmament of Law’ whose instrument the king becomes when he receives the umbrella at the coronation ritual. The ruler and his administration are thereby obligated to conduct the government in accord with the highest ethical principles of the Hindu tradition” (p. 157).

What about Kautilya, what about the callous canons of Shukra, one may ask. The author anticipates this objection and points out that while at first sight there may appear to be exceptions, “further consideration reveals a careful orienting of the political with the philosophical and ethical tenets of Hinduism. Even Kautilya, for instance, advises the king as follows: Restraint of the organs of sense on which success in study and discipline depends, can be enforced by abandoning lust, anger, greed, vanity...whosoever is of reverse character...will soon perish, though possessed of the whole earth bounded by the four quarters.” (p. 7).

The book is divided into two parts, the first dealing with Ancient Political Thought comprising representative selections (with suitable introductions and analyses) from the *Manu-Samhita*, the Code of Manu, the oldest known book on Hindu Law enjoying precedence over all other codes, the *Shānti-Parvan* which contains the gist of political wisdom in the Epic of Vyasa, the celebrated *Arthashastra of Kautilya*¹ and the comparatively later *Shukra-*

“The Umbrella also symbolises religious authority and is used with persons of high spiritual attainment, such as the heads of the great religious centres founded by the Hindu leaders Shankara and Ramanuja. The author has seen the umbrella employed in ceremonial processions in India. This varied use illustrates the ultimate common basis of spiritual and temporal authority in the Indian tradition. The umbrella symbol is of very great antiquity and is found in many Middle East and Far East areas. It was carried into Malaya and Indonesia by the South Indian Tamils, whose influence begins at least as early as the second Century. In the great States which developed in these areas, the elaborate court procedure of the Hindus was established—including the insignia of the Royal Umbrella. Even the later Mohamedan sultans retained the earlier procedures and symbols, which are in use in some areas Umbrella is yellow rather than white. In India itself the Umbrella symbol was used in comparatively recent times notably by Shivaji, leader of the great seventeenth century Maratha empire in western India. He proclaimed himself after the coronation ceremony as *Ghatrapati* or ‘Lord of the Umbrella’.”

¹ Writing about this important treatise which was first published as late as 1909 by Sri Shama Sastry and caused ‘something like an upheaval in Indian political studies’ the author raises an interesting question: “Did Machiavelli find his inspiration and model in Kautilya? The first Europeans visited India in the fifteenth century, and the Portuguese opened an all-water route to Calcutt in 1498. Fifteen years later Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*. Did some European bring back an Arabic or other translation of the *Arthashastra* which Machiavelli used and never acknowledged? Such a simple explanation is hardly pos-

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Niti which "represents primarily the last summing up of Hindu political thought, borrowing freely...from the Mahabharata, Manu, and even Kaman-daka, and thus indirectly from Kautilya". The second part, Modern Political Thought, gives a rapid account of the political ferment caused by the Indian Renaissance in the last century and this is followed by a series of extracts from the writings of Vivekananda, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhiji, "the four later thinkers" who the author adds, "stand out for the depth, completeness and stimulation of their philosophies." (p. 85) The reader would notice a gap between the ancient and the modern contributions viz. the Moslem, particularly the Moghul influence on the evolution of Indian political thought. The author would seem to have left it out as this represented an alien element which "was never truly assimilated into the classical tradition". However, we cannot help feeling that that it would have added to the representative character of the work if a chapter had been devoted to this topic.

With admirable clear sight the author traces certain common threads that give continuity and the principles giving unity to the Indian political tradition down the millennia. "Dharma" he points out, "is the core concept of Hindu political theory, profound in its implications and subject to varied definition. Ultimately it is more than law, for it is what underlies and creates law in the universe." "Dharma (is) not a creed or religion but a mode of life or a code of conduct, which regulated a man's work and activities as a member of society and as an individual and was intended to bring about the gradual development of a man and to enable him to reach what was deemed to be the goal of human existence. It is not surprising therefore, that Hindu law began with duties rather than with rights, as in the West. ...Politics was considered the 'master science', since dealing with Dharma, it covered that vast range of human relationships that MacIver has so aptly termed

sible—aside from textual considerations—for there are innumerable examples in European literature beginning as early as A.D. 800 of manuals of practical statecraft for the guidance of the king. If Kautilya was ever a model, the influence must have long preceded Machiavelli's time. Also, we have seen a possible parallel influence in the *Shantiparvan*." (p. 50-51)

The author's remarks while dealing with certain criticisms of this work are to be noted: "Although Kautilya has become a symbol of cold and cynical realism in Indian thought, such characterisation is not entirely deserved. The *Shantiparvan*, too, has its realism, as have other classical writings. And despite this feature, we find the *Arthashastra* thoroughly grounded on Brahmanical doctrine....Whatever our individual appraisal may be, few will fail to see the ironical relevancy of Kautilya's analysis of foreign policy to our present-day problems of power politics." (p. 52)

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‘the firmament of law’. In this respect, Dharma is the creator of the state, and political science is more than a study of government.”¹ (Pp. 15-16)

The King was the instrument, the first servant of Dharma. He held power not by any divine right inviolable, but as the chosen executor and guarantor of Dharma. He had no right to interfere with it. If any change was sought to be made in the mode of the workings of Dharma, it had to be done in consultation with the representatives of the various interests in the realm. Wherever the king tried to strike at Dharma he was removed by the will of the people. As Sri Aurobindo points out; “In spite of the sanctity and prestige attaching to the sovereign it was laid down that obedience ceased to be binding if the king ceased to be faithful executor of the Dharma.”²

Monarchy was the normal form of government in India though there are instances of republics or *Ganas* regarding which the author remarks with a visible note of irritation, ‘much has been made of these states by Jayaswal and others as proving a democratic tradition in India.’ Sri Aurobindo drew attention to this failing of modern Indian scholarship when he wrote, now four decades ago; “Indian scholars have attempted to read the modern ideas and types of democracy and even a parliamentary system into the past of India, but this seems to me an ill-judged endeavour. There was a strong democratic element, if we must use the western terms, in Indian polity and even institutions that present a certain analogy to the parliamentary form, but in reality these features were of India’s own kind and not at all the same thing as modern parliaments and modern democracy.”³

Interwoven with the master idea of Dharma was the institution of *Varna Class*, the fourfold order of the socio-political set-up which has come in

¹ The author also notes: “Some modern Hindu positivists, however, follow the Austinian school of legal theory and contend that Dharma is itself the creation of the state, since it is obeyed only because of the coercive power of the latter. This is contrary not only to Hindu tradition but to the findings of such modern scholars as MacIver.” (p. 166)

Vide Sri Aurobindo: *Foundations of Indian Culture* (p. 372-3): “A greater sovereign than the king was the Dharma...this impersonal authority was considered sacred and eternal in its spirit and the totality of its body, always characteristically same, the changes organically and spontaneously brought about in its actual form by the evolution of the society being constantly incorporated in it, regional, family and other customs forming a sort of attendant and subordinate body capable of change only from within,—and with the Dharma no secular authority had any right of autocratic interference.”

² *Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 367

³ *ibid* p.

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for so much ill-informed criticism. The author approaches this question in an understanding spirit and quotes Tagore explaining it "as India's attempt to solve her complex social and racial problems by a system of specialisation and toleration that minimised the frictions of ruthless competition." (p.22) Note also the dictum in *Shukraniti*, "Not by birth are the Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Sudra and Mleccha separated, but by virtue and works", and the author's comment thereon: "The important point here is that persons are given caste or class status in terms of their actual work and individual character and ability, rather than by birth. In a basic sense, however, this is not inconsistent with traditional Hindu principles, for we find a similar viewpoint in Manu (XII.114) 'Even if thousands of Brahmans who...are unacquainted with the Veda...meet, they cannot form a (judicial) assembly.'"¹ Speaking of the relations of the State with other States i.e. international relations, the author writes: "The

¹ It will be apposite and instructive to know what Sri Aurobindo has said on the subject of the Chaturvarna in India. Here are a few relevant passages:

"The system (of Four Orders) served again as an automatic means of securing a fixed division of labour and a settled economic status, the hereditary principle at first prevailing, although here even the theory was more rigid than the practice, but none was denied the right or opportunity of amassing wealth and making some figure in society, administration and politics by means of influence or status in his own order. For, finally, the social hierarchy was not at the same time political hierarchy; all the four orders had their part in the common political rights of the citizen and in the assemblies and administrative bodies their place and their share of influence.....

The whole Indian system was founded upon a close participation of all the orders in the common life, each predominating in its own field, the Brahmin in religion, learning and letters, the Kshatriya in war, king-craft and interstate political action, the Vaishya in wealth-getting and productive economical function, but none, not even the Shudra, excluded from his share in the civic life and an effective place and voice in politics, administration, justice. As a consequence the old Indian polity at no time developed, or at least it did not maintain for long, those exclusive forms of class rule that have so long and powerfully marked the political history of other countries. A priestly theocracy, like that of Tibet, or the rule of a landed and military aristocracy that prevailed for centuries in France and England and other European countries or a mercantile oligarchy, as in Carthage and Venice, were forms of government foreign to the Indian spirit....

The Indian mind and temperament less exclusively intellectual and vital, more intuitively synthetic and flexible than that of the occidental peoples arrived, not certainly at any ideal system of society and politics, but at least at a wise and stable synthesis—not a dangerously unstable equilibrium, not a compromise or balance—of all the natural powers and orders, an organic and vital coordination respectful of the free functioning of all the organs of the communal body and therefore ensured, although not against the decadence that over takes all human systems, at any rate against any organic disturbance or disorder." (*Foundations of Indian Culture* p.394-6)

REVIEW

Mandala or 'circle of States' was the basis of diplomatic theory. Around any given state was a concentric series of unfriendly and friendly powers whose diplomatic tendencies were predetermined by geographic position. An adjoining state was a natural enemy, and the state beyond it constituted a natural friend, and for each of these categories existed a set of appropriate diplomatic precepts. These rules of diplomacy provide us with some of the most cold-blooded Machiavellian realism in the history of political theory... *Such policies however, were considered proper only in times of national disaster, or, at least, they and their material objectives were relegated to a comparatively low scale of value in contrast to the high codes and goals of Dharma—especially in the field of domestic administration.* (Italics ours). Indeed, the moral behaviour of the ruler may be taken as a corner-stone of Indian thought." (p. 24-25)

It is indeed not easy to make a selection from the writings of Sri Aurobindo on Indian Polity: to choose one portion is to deny oneself the profit of the other. All the same, Dr. Brown has shown foresight in choosing one single question which constantly haunts the student of Indian history and even casts a doubt on the very soundness of Indian political mind viz. the *Failure of Unity*, and giving Sri Aurobindo's challenging reply to the critics of this ancient Polity. "The ancient nations, contemporaries of India, and many younger born than she are dead and only their monuments left behind them. Greece and Egypt exist only on the map and in name, for it is not the soul of Hellas or the deeper nation-soul that built Memphis which we now find at Athens or at Cairo. Rome imposed a political and a purely outward cultural unity on the Mediterranean peoples, but their living spiritual and cultural oneness she could not create, and therefore the east broke away from the west, Africa kept no impress of the Roman interlude, and even the western nations still called Latin could offer no living resistance to barbarian invaders and had to be reborn by the infusion of a foreign vitality to become modern Italy, Spain and France. But India still lives and keeps the continuity of her inner mind and soul and spirit with the India of the ages." (Sri Aurobindo) What is the secret of this survival of the Indian nation? How far was her spiritual and cultural unity translated on the more external levels of political organisation? What were the reasons that stood in the way of the achievement of a synthesised Unity that alone can suit the genius of her people? And what are the future prospects? These are some of the pertinent questions that have been raised and answered by Sri Aurobindo in the Essay under reference.

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Before concluding we may be permitted to draw the attention of the fair-minded author to an error of fact into which he has been led. Recording the great Homage paid to Sri Aurobindo by Rabindranath Tagore hailing him as "Voice incarnate, free, of India's soul", Dr. Brown makes the following note: "Dr. Amiya Chakravarty, formerly of Calcutta University, who served as Tagore's secretary, has advised me that Tagore, in all probability, was unaware of Ghose's secret political activities at this period and that tribute was therefore in reference to his literary achievements." (p. 176). We are afraid, the author's informant is less than fair to the intelligence of the Poet-patriot in imputing to him ignorance on a matter which was in everybody's knowledge in the intelligentsia of Bengal viz. that Sri Aurobindo was engaged at that time in momentous political activity, both public and secret. Besides, the Poet himself participated in some of these activities which were strongly influenced, where not personally directed, by Sri Aurobindo and we are quite sure that he was not 'unaware' of things going on around him. Again, the homage was published in September 1907 when Sri Aurobindo was in the centre of the political storm; it was written precisely on the occasion of the Bande Mataram prosecution launched against him. Those lines of surging emotion uttered in the midst of the volcanic political upheaval that shook the land, addressed to

The fiery messenger that with the lamp of God

Hath come,

can hardly be passed by as just an Ode by one member of a literary club to another!

M. P. PANDIT

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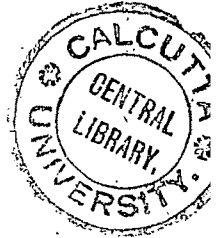
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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - Sri Aurobindo.

EDITORIALS

RECORD OF WORLD-HISTORY

ALL that has happened upon earth, everything from the beginning of creation till now, everything without exception have been recorded somewhere in some particular world or region of consciousness. All that man has thought, his researches and discoveries, his findings and conclusions are kept intact, carefully stored. If you want to know anything of the past history of the earth, the happening at a particular time and place, you have simply to transplant yourself into that world and look into the records.

It is a very curious place, something like a vast library. It consists of an infinite number of cells, as it were, each containing all information on a particular subject. They seem to be squares in shape and they remain closed normally. If you have to consult a particular square, you press a button and it opens and out of it comes a roll of written matter. You unroll it and find out what you want. There are millions and millions and millions of these

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cells and rolls, around, above, everywhere. Fortunately in the mental world you can move anywhere as you like, you do not require lifts and ladders to get up.

The point, however, is how to go there at all. Well, the first thing is that you must completely silence your mind. Mental cogitations, agitations you must leave behind, no thoughts must enter your consciousness, it must be tranquil and still, like a transparent sheet of water or smooth and polished like a mirror. The description I have given of a library is only an image, the real thing is something different. However, you have in this way some idea to go upon. In the silent mind you form a point of consciousness and send it out as an emissary to gather the required information. This point of consciousness must be absolutely detached and free to go as it likes; for if it were in any way kept tied to the normal movements of your own mind, then you will not go further than what is in your head. You must be able to make your brain a blank, you must have no preconceived notion, no idea that the solution of your problem might lie in this way or that. As I say, your mind has to be a thoroughly blank page, a clean slate, with nothing written on it, no mark even. There should be instead a sincere aspiration to know the truth, without postulating beforehand what kind of truth it might be; otherwise you will meet your own formation in the brain.

You can certainly test and correct the information you get from your inner voyage by outside information, what others have found or what are recorded in books. The inner knowledge need not and should not replace the outer knowledge, but supplement it, both should support and complete each other. But there is a mixture about which you must be very careful. Your silent mind, your inner consciousness receives the necessary knowledge, but as you want to express it or translate in normal terms, that is to say, as your brain gets active again, it may and often does supply its own materials and formations and the original knowledge gets disturbed and distorted. Sometimes what you may do is to dictate most passively the things you see or perceive and let another take down in writing as you proceed. You must say exactly as you see and the other write down exactly as he hears.

It is the image of reading a book that I have given you. But it is, as I said, only an image. What it is really is a kind of perception. And the perception may be in the form of an image, it may be in the form of a narrative. At other times it may be a simple answer to a particular question. There are many kinds and varieties of record, differing according to the types or levels of consciousness that you go to.

EDITORIALS

Naturally the process is not easy and available to everybody, as an ordinary book. It requires a special aptitude and a special discipline.

FREEDOM AND DESTINY

From a certain point of view whatever happens here in the material world is a reproduction or realisation of whatever has already happened or existed on another level of reality. In this world then there would be no free choice, everything being predetermined. From another standpoint, however, one can say with equal truth that the world here is being recreated every moment; it is not a mere replay or flash-back of a past event, a pre-existent phenomenon, but something ever new and fresh. Take, for an example, a material body, of a particular chemical composition, having some well-defined properties; it behaves according to that nature and produces inevitably results deducible from it. Now, if a new element is introduced into the thing at any moment, the whole quality of the composition and its behaviour will change. Something like that happens in the universe.

The universe is a huge mass of innumerable elements forming a certain composition and in accordance with this composition all are organised within itself. But such an arrangement is not the end or the culmination; it is not static, but moving forward; it is in the process of development. For at any moment, through the action of a different kind, one or more new elements can be introduced into the total mass that forms the universe at a given time and that will necessarily change the whole inner composition. The universe, the material universe, I mean, is a concretisation of a certain aspect or emanation of the Supreme. This concretisation is progressive, not necessarily in a constant and regular way, but in answer to a law, with a subtle kind or degree of liberty. Thus, in the composition of the universe at a moment new elements penetrate and alter the organisation. The organisation that was perfect in itself and moved and unrolled itself according to a definite plan and pattern, suddenly finds itself changed and the inner relations too are modified and attain a different poise. That may give the impression of something incoherent or imprecise or miraculous, according to the manner in which one looks at the problem. So there are these two simultaneous facts or factors: there is a determinism which is absolute in its way with a complementary movement of liberty, the unforeseen addition into a fixed existing sum.

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This addition comes from the aspiration of the supreme consciousness. There is nothing to wonder at the phenomenon: There is an aspiration acting in the world, moving with a certain end in view; the purpose is to bring back the fallen and obscured consciousness to its original and normal state of the divine consciousness. Each time that this aspiring consciousness meets an obstacle in its working, a new resistance to conquer or to transform, it calls for a new Force. And this new Force is a kind of new creation. In the human being too there are different domains in obedience to a law of correspondence; in each there is for him a different destiny and each is absolute in its line. But there is also in him, through his aspiration, a capacity to enter into relation with a domain higher than where he happens to be and bring down an action of this higher domain into the lower determinism. So we can say that there is a horizontal determinism in each domain, absolute in its normal working; but there is also a vertical intervention from other higher domains or even from the highest and then the lower determinism is changed completely. Thus every human being is at once a sum of various determinisms, absolute in their way, and there is also an absolute liberty that can intervene by bringing down other forces into the apparently rigid frame of destiny of the lower worlds and alter it. That is how things in the world give the impression of the unforeseen, the incalculable, the miraculous.

You may call this intervention Grace; for without the Divine Grace this could not happen. There is a consciousness and a vision of things where all are brought back to this single source; Grace only exists, nothing else is there. That does every thing. But as you have not risen to that summit, had not that extreme realisation, you have to take into account your own person, your personal aspiration, the thing that calls for the Grace and to which the Grace responds. The two are needed here. Both are ultimately ways of viewing the same truth. The mind, however, finds it difficult to conceive both in a simultaneous movement. The rigid distinctions it makes takes away much from the supple and subtle and integral truth of a total experience.

MYSTICISM AND OCCULTISM

Mysticism is more or less an emotional relation with what one feels to be a Divine Power—it is a relation very intimate, emotive and intense with something invisible which one takes for the Divine.

EDITORIALS

Occultism is the knowledge of invisible forces and the power to handle them. It is a science, altogether a science. I always compare occultism with chemistry or physics; for occult knowledge is very much like scientific knowledge, only science deals with material objects and forces, while occultism deals with invisible entities and energies, their potentials of combination and association. And as by your chemical or physical knowledge you control material phenomena, in the same way by the occult knowledge you control subtle phenomena, make them active and effective. The procedure also is quite scientific. It is to be learnt exactly as you do a science. It is not a matter of feeling or emotion: it is nothing vague or uncertain. You must work as in a laboratory. You have to learn the laws of action and reaction and apply them. Only there are not many people to teach you. Also it is not without danger. There are in this field combinations as explosive as any chemical combination.

It is a thing, however, that can be learnt. But one must have the aptitude. If you have the power latent in you, you can develop it by practice; but if you have not, you can try for 50 years, it will come to nothing. Everybody cannot have the occult power; it is as if you said that everybody in the world could be a musician or a painter or a poet. There are people who can and there are those who cannot. Usually, if you are interested in the subject, unless it is a mere idle curiosity, it is a sign that you have the gift. You can then try. But, as I say, it is to be done with great precaution.

Thus, for example, when one goes out of the body—I have often spoken to you of this phenomenon—even if it be just to a little extent, even if only mentally—then what goes out is a part of the consciousness that controls the normal activities of the body, what remains is the portion that is automatic, producing the spontaneous involuntary movements such as blood circulation or secretion etc.; also other nervous or automatic thought movements; this region is no longer under the control of the conscious thinking part. Now, there is always in the atmosphere around you a good number of small entities, quite small often, that are generally formed out of the disintegrated remains of a dead human being: they are like microbes, the microbes of the vital. They have forms and can be visible and they have a will of their own. You may not say they are always wicked, but they are full of mischief, that is to say, they like amusing themselves at the cost of human beings. As soon as they see that someone is not sufficiently protected, they rush in and take possession of the automatic mentality and bring about all kinds of disagreeable happenings—nightmares, various physical disturbances—you feel

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choked, bite or swallow your tongue and even more serious things. When you wish to go into trance, to have the experience of being outside the body, you must have someone by your side, not only to keep watch on your physical body, but also to prevent the vital entities from getting possession of the nerve centres which, as I said, are no longer under the control and protection of the conscious intelligence. There is a still greater danger. When one goes out of the body in a more or less concrete or material way, retaining only a thin and fragile contact—a thread of light, as it were—with the body, this thread of contact must be protected, for the attack of the hostiles may come upon it and cut it; if it is cut one can no longer return into the body, and that means death.

All that signifies that occultism is not a joke or a mere play; you cannot take to it simply to amuse yourself. It must be done as it ought to be done, under proper conditions and with great care. The one thing absolutely essential is, I repeat once more, to be totally fearless. If you happen to meet in your dreams terrible scenes and are frightened, then you must not approach occultism. If, on the contrary, you can remain perfectly tranquil in the face of the most frightful menaces causing you only amusement, if you can handle such situations safely and successfully, that would show that you have some capacity and then you can try seriously. There are people who are real fighters in their sleep; if they meet an enemy they can face him, they can not only defend, but can attack and conquer.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

THE LINE OF RAGHU¹

(A FRAGMENT)

FOR mastery of word and sense I bow to the Pair close-wedded as word and sense, the parents of the world, the Mountain's child and the Mighty Lord. 1

Wide is the gulf between the race born of the Sun and a mind thus scantily stored! I am one that in his infatuation would cross in a raft the difficult ocean. 2

Dull of wit, yet aspiring to poetic glory I shall expose myself to mockery like a dwarf who in his greed lifts up his arms to a fruit meant only for the giant's grasp. 3

Yet into the story of this race a door of speech has been made by the inspired minds of old and through which I can enter as a thread can pass through a gem which the diamond's point has bored. 4

Therefore this tale of the Raghus, the kings pure from their birth, they who left not work till work's fruit appeared, they who were masters of earth to the ocean's bound and their chariot journeyed even to the heavens. 5

Ever according to the ordinance they offered to the sacrificial flames and honoured ever the suppliant with his whole desire, they meted the punishment of the guilty by his offence, they were wakeful to the hour. 6

They gathered riches only to give and spoke little that they might speak nought but truth and conquered only for glory and were householders only to prolong the race. 7

In childhood students of knowledge, in youth seekers after enjoyment, in old age pursuers of the sage's path and in their end left by Yoga their bodies,—8

The tale of their line I will tell though meagre my wealth of speech, for I am impelled to this rashness by their virtues that have touched my ear. 9

The wise should lend ear to it who are cause that good is discerned from bad, for it is by fire that the purity of gold is marked or else the *darkness of its alloy*². 10

SRI AUROBINDO

¹ A translation of the first ten verses from the *Raghuwamśa* of Kalidasa

² Or, *dullness of hue*

THE CONDITIONS OF ATTAINMENT TO THE GNOSIS¹

KNOWLEDGE is the first principle of the Vijnana, but knowledge is not its only power. The Truth-consciousness like every other plane, founds itself upon that particular principle which is naturally the key of all its motions; but it is not limited by it, it contains all the other powers of existence. Only the character and working of these other powers is modified and moulded into conformity with its own original and dominant law; intelligence, life, body, will, consciousness, bliss are all luminous, awake, instinct with divine knowledge. This is indeed the process of Purusha-Prakriti everywhere; it is the key-movement of all the hierarchy and graded harmonies of manifested existence.

In the mental being mind-sense or intelligence is the original and dominant principle. The mental being in the mind-world where he is native is in his central and determining nature intelligence; he is a centre of intelligence, a massed movement of intelligence, a receptive and radiating action of intelligence. He has the intelligent sense of his own existence, the intelligent sense of other existence than his own, the intelligent sense of his own nature and activities and the activities of others, the intelligent sense of the nature of things and persons and their relations with himself and each other. That makes up his experience of existence. He has no other knowledge of existence, no knowledge of life and matter except as they make themselves sensible to him and capable of being seized by his mental intelligence; what he does not sense and conceive, is to him practically non-existent, or at least alien to his world and his nature.

Man is in his principle a mental being, but not one living in a mind world, but in a dominantly physical existence; his is a mind encased in Matter and conditioned by Matter. Therefore he has to start with the action of the physical senses which are all channels of material contact; he does not start with the mind-sense. But even so he does not and cannot make free use of anything conveyed by these physical organs until and unless they are taken

¹ Chapter XXXV, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, revised by Sri Aurobindo

THE CONDITIONS OF ATTAINMENT TO THE GNOSIS

hold of by the mind-sense and turned into stuff and value of his intelligent being. What is in the lower subhuman submental world a pranic, a nervous, a dynamic action and reaction, that proceeds very well without any need of translation into mind-terms or governed by mind, has in him to be raised and offered to some kind of intelligence. In order to be characteristically human it has to become first a sense of force, sense of desire, sense of will, sense of intelligent will-action or mentally conscious sense of force-action. His lower delight of being translates itself into a sense of mental or mentalised vital or physical pleasure and its perversion pain, or into a mental or mentalised feeling-sensation of liking and disliking or into an intelligence of delight and failure of delight,—all phenomena of the intelligent mind-sense. So too that which is above him and that which is around him and in which he lives,—God, the universal being, the cosmic Forces,—are non-existent and unreal to him until his mind awakes to them and gets, not yet their true truth, but some idea, observation, inference, imagination of things supersensuous, some mental sense of the Infinite, some intelligent interpreting consciousness of the forces of the superself above and around him.

All changes when we pass from mind to gnosis; for there a direct inherent knowledge is the central principle. The gnostic (*viññānamaya*) being is in its character a truth-consciousness, a centre and circumference of the truth-vision of things, a massed movement or subtle body of gnosis. Its action is a self-fulfilling and radiating action of the truth-power of things according to the inner law of their deepest truest self and nature. This truth of things at which we must arrive before we can enter into the gnosis,—for in that all exists and from that all originates on the gnostic plane,—is, first of all, a truth of unity, of oneness, but of unity originating diversity, unity in multiplicity and still unity always, an indefeasible oneness. State of gnosis, the condition of *viññānamaya* being, is impossible without ample and close self-identification of ourselves with all existence and with all existences, a universal pervasiveness, a universal comprehension or containing, a certain all-in-allness.

The gnostic Purusha has normally the consciousness of itself as infinite, normally too the consciousness of containing the world in itself and exceeding it; it is not like the divided mental being normally bound to a consciousness that feels itself contained in the world and a part of it. It follows that a deliverance from the limiting and imprisoning ego is the first elementary step towards the being of the gnosis; for so long as we live in the ego, it is idle to hope for this higher reality, this vast self-consciousness, this true self-knowledge. The least reversion to ego-thought, ego-action, ego-will

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brings back the consciousness tumbling out of such gnostic Truth as it has attained into the falsehoods of the divided mind-nature. A secure universality of being is the very basis of this luminous higher consciousness. Abandoning all rigid separateness (but getting instead a certain transcendent overlook or independence) we have to feel ourselves one with all things and beings, to identify ourselves with them, to become aware of them as ourselves, to feel their being as our own, to admit their consciousness as part of ours, to contact their energy as intimate to our energy, to learn how to be one self with all. That oneness is not indeed all that is needed, but it is a first condition and without it there is no gnosis.

This universality is impossible to achieve in its completeness so long as we continue to feel ourselves, as we now feel, a consciousness lodged in an individual mind, life and body. There has to be a certain elevation of the Purusha out of the physical and even out of the mental into the *vijñānamaya* body. No longer can the brain nor its corresponding mental "lotus" remain the centre of our thinking, no longer the heart nor its corresponding "lotus" the originating centre of our emotional and sensational being. The conscious centre of our being, our thought, our will and action, even the original force of our sensations and emotions rise out of the body and mind take a free station above them. No longer have we the sensation of living in the body, but are above it as its lord, possessor or Ishwara and at the same time encompass it with a wider consciousness than that of the imprisoned physical sense. Now we come to realise with a very living force of reality, normal and continuous, what the sages meant when they spoke of the soul carrying the body or when they said that the soul is not in the body, but the body in the soul. It is from above the body and not from the brain that we shall ideate and will; the brain-action will become only a response and movement of the physical machinery to the shock of the thought-force and will-force from above. All will be originated from above; from above, all that corresponds in gnosis to our present mental activity takes place. Many, if not all, of these conditions of the gnostic change can and indeed have to be attained long before we reach the gnosis,—but imperfectly at first as if by a reflection,—in higher mind itself and more completely in what we may call an overmind consciousness between mentality and gnosis.

But this centre and this action are free, not bound, not dependent on the physical machine, not clamped to a narrow ego-sense. It is not involved in body; it is not shut up in a separated individuality feeling out for clumsy contacts with the world out or groping inward for its own deeper spirit.

THE CONDITIONS OF ATTAINMENT TO THE GNOSIS

For in this great transformation we begin to have a consciousness not shut up in a generating box but diffused freely and extending self-existently everywhere; there is or may be a centre, but it is a convenience for individual action, not rigid, not constitutive or separative. The very nature of our conscious activities is henceforth universal; one with those of the universal being, it proceeds from universality to a supple and variable individualisation. It has become the awareness of an infinite being who acts always universally though with emphasis on an individual formation of its energies. But this emphasis is differential rather than separative, and this formation is no longer what we now understand by individuality; there is no longer a petty limited constructed person shut up in the formula of his own mechanism. This state of consciousness is so abnormal to our present mode of being that to the rational man who does not possess it it may seem impossible or even a state of alienation; but once possessed it vindicates itself even to the mental intelligence by its greater calm, freedom, light, power, effectivity of will, verifiable truth of ideation and feeling. For this condition begins already on the higher levels of liberated mind and can therefore be partly sensed and understood by mind-intelligence only when it leaves behind the mental levels, but it rises to perfect self-possession only in the supramental gnosis.

In this state of consciousness the infinite becomes to us the primal, the actual reality, the one thing immediately and sensibly true. It becomes impossible for us to think of or realise the finite apart from our fundamental sense of the infinite, in which alone the finite can live, can form itself, can have any reality or duration. So long as this finite mind and body are to our consciousness the first fact of our existence and the foundation of all our thinking, feeling and willing and so long as things finite are the normal reality from which we can rise occasionally, or even frequently, to an idea and sense of the infinite, we are still very far away from the gnosis. In the plane of the gnosis the infinite is at once our normal consciousness of being, its first fact, our sensible substance. It is very concretely to us there the foundation from which everything finite forms itself and its boundless incalculable forces are the origination of all our thought, will and delight. But this infinite is not only an infinite of pervasion or of extension in which everything forms and happens. Behind that immeasurable extension the gnostic consciousness is always aware of a spaceless inner infinite. It is through this double infinite that we shall arrive at the essential being of Sachchidananda, the highest self of our own being and the totality of our cosmic existence. There

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is opened to us an illimitable existence which we feel as if it were an infinity above us to which we attempt to rise and an infinity around us into which we strive to dissolve our separate existence. Afterwards we widen into it and rise into it; we break out of the ego into its largeness and are that forever. If this liberation is achieved, its power can take, if so we will, increasing possession of our lower being also until even our lowest and perversest activities are refashioned into the truth of the Vijnana.

This is the basis, this sense of the infinite and possession by the infinite, and only when it is achieved, can we progress towards some normality of the supramental ideation, perception, sense identity, awareness. For even the sense of the infinite is only a first foundation and much more has to be done before the consciousness can become dynamically gnostic. For the supramental knowledge is the play of a supreme light; there are many other lights, other levels of knowledge higher than human mind which can open in us and receive or reflect something of that effulgence even before we rise into the gnosis. But to command or wholly possess it we must first enter into and become the being of the supreme light, our consciousness must be transformed into that consciousness, its principle and power of self-awareness and all-awareness by identity must be the very stuff of our existence. For our means and ways of knowledge and action must necessarily be according to the nature of our consciousness and it is the consciousness that must radically change if we are to command and not only be occasionally visited by that higher power of knowledge that is not confined to a higher thought or the action of a sort of divine reason. It takes up all our present means of knowledge immensely extended, active and effective where they are now debarred, blind, infructuous, and turns them into a high and intense perceptive activity of the Vijnana. Thus it takes up our sense action and illumines it even in its ordinary field so that we get a true sense of things. But also it enables the mind-sense to have a direct perception of the inner as well as the outer phenomenon, to feel and receive or perceive, for instance, the thoughts, feelings, sensations, the nervous reactions of the object on which it is turned.¹ It uses the subtle senses as well as the physical and saves them from their errors. It gives us the knowledge, the experience of planes of existence other than the material to which our ordinary mentality is ignorantly attached and it enlarges the world for us. It transforms similarly the

¹ This power, says Patanjali, comes by '*Sanyama*' on an object. That is for the mentality, in the gnosis there is no need of *Sanyama*. For this kind of perception is the natural action of the Vijnana.

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sensations and gives them their full intensity as well as their full holding-power; for in our normal mentality the full intensity is impossible because the power to hold and sustain vibrations beyond a certain point is denied to it, mind and body would both break under the shock or the prolonged strain. It takes up too the element of knowledge in our feelings and emotions,—for our feelings too contain a power of knowledge and a power of effectuation which we do not recognise and do not properly develop,—and delivers them at the same time from their limitations and from their errors and perversions. For in all things the gnosis is the Truth, the Right, the highest Law, *devānām adabāhāni vratāni*.

Knowledge and Force or Will—for all conscious force is will—are the twin sides of the action of consciousness. In our mentality they are divided. The idea comes first, the will comes stumbling after it or rebels against it or is used as its imperfect tool with imperfect results; or else the will starts up first with a blind or half-seeing idea in it and works out something in confusion of which we get the right understanding afterwards. There is no oneness, no full understanding between these powers in us; or else there is no perfect correspondence of initiation with effectuation. Nor is the individual will in harmony with the universal; it tries to reach beyond it or falls short of it or deviates from and strives against it. It knows not the times and seasons of the Truth, nor its degrees and measures. The Vijnana takes up the will and puts it first into harmony and then into oneness with the truth of the supramental knowledge. In this knowledge the idea in the individual is one with the idea in the universal, because both are brought back to the truth of the supreme Knowledge and the transcendent Will. The gnosis takes up not only our intelligent will, but our wishes, desires, even what we call the lower desires, the instincts, the impulses, the reachings out of sense and sensation and it transforms them. They cease to be wishes and desires, because they cease first to be personal and then cease to be that struggling after the ungrasped which we mean by craving and desire. No longer blind or half-blind reachings out of the instinctive or intelligent mentality, they are transformed into a various action of the Truth-will; and that will acts with an inherent knowledge of the right measures of its decreed action and therefore with an effectivity unknown to our mental willing. Therefore too in the action of the *vijnānamaya* will there is no place for sin; for all sin is an error of the will, a desire and act of the Ignorance.

When desire ceases entirely, grief and all inner suffering also cease. The

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Vijnana takes up not only our parts of knowledge and will, but our parts of affection and delight and changes them into action of the divine Ananda. For if knowledge and force are the twin sides or powers of the action of consciousness, delight, Ananda—which is something higher than what we call pleasure—is the very stuff of consciousness and the natural result of the interaction of knowledge and will, force and self-awareness. Both pleasure and pain, both joy and grief are deformations caused by the disturbance of harmony between our consciousness and the force it applies, between our knowledge and will, a breaking up of their oneness by a descent to a lower plane in which they are limited, divided in themselves, restrained from their full and proper action, at odds with other-force, other-consciousness, other-knowledge, other-will. The Vijnana sets this to rights by the power of its truth and a wholesale restoration to oneness and harmony, to the Right and the highest Law. It takes up all our emotions and turns them into various form of love and delight, even our hatreds, repulsions, causes of suffering. It finds out or reveals the meaning they missed and by missing it became the perversions they are; it restores our whole nature to the eternal Good. It deals similarly with our perceptions and sensations and reveals all the delight that they seek, but in its truth, not in any perversion and wrong seeking and wrong reception; it teaches even our lower impulses to lay hold on the Divine and Infinite in the appearances after which they run. All this is done not in the values of the lower being, but by a lifting up of the mental, vital, material into the inalienable purity, the natural intensity, the continual ecstasy, one yet manifold, of the divine Ananda.

Thus the being of Vijnana is in all its activities a play of perfected knowledge-power, will-power, delight-power, raised to a higher than the mental, vital and bodily level. All-pervasive, universalised, freed from egoistic personality and individuality, it is the play of a higher Self, a higher consciousness and therefore a higher force and higher delight of being. All that acts in the Vijnana in the purity, in the right, in the truth of the superior or divine Prakriti. Its powers may often seem to be what are called in ordinary Yogic parlance siddhis, by the Europeans occult powers, shunned and dreaded by devotees and by many Yogins as snares, stumbling blocks, diversions from the true seeking after the Divine. But they have that character and are dangerous here because they are sought in the lower being, abnormally, by the ego for an egoistic satisfaction. In the Vijnana they are neither occult nor siddhis, but the open, unforced and normal

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play of its nature. The Vijnana is the Truth-power and Truth-action of the divine Being in its divine identities, and, when this acts through the individual lifted to the gnostic plane, it fulfils itself unperverted, without fault or egoistic reaction, without diversion from the possession of the Divine. There the individual is no longer the ego, but the free Jīva domiciled in the higher divine nature of which he is a portion, *parā prakṛtir jīvabhūtā*, the nature of the supreme and universal Self seen indeed in the play of multiple individuality but without the veil of ignorance, with self-knowledge, in its multiple oneness, in the truth of its divine Shakti.

In the Vijnana the right relation and action of Purusha and Prakriti are found, because there they become unified and the Divine is no longer veiled in Maya. All is his action. The Jīva no longer says "I think, I act, I desire, I feel"; he does not even say like the sadhaka striving after unity but before he has reached it, "As appointed by Thee seated in my heart, I act". For the heart, the centre of the mental consciousness is no longer the centre of origination but only a blissful channel. He is rather aware of the Divine seated above, lord of all, *adhiṣṭhita*, as well as acting within him. And seated himself in that higher being, *parārdhe*, *paramāsyām parāvati*, he can say truly and boldly, "God himself by his Prakriti knows, acts, loves, takes delight through my individuality and its figures and fulfils there in its higher and divine measures the multiple *līlā* which the Infinite for ever plays in the universality which is himself for ever."

SRI AUROBINDO

EAST-WEST SYNTHESIS IN SRI AUROBINDO

FOR a comparative appraisal of the cultures of the East and West the concept of "man" is most appropriate, since 'man' is always central or basic to every civilisation and system of life. And it must be so, because all civilisations are man's creation and meant to afford satisfaction to him. However in some it is directly so, as in the eastern cultures generally, where man is avowedly the main interest; and in some indirectly, as, for example, in the modern western culture, where the chief interest has been external nature and a technological reconstruction and organisation of life. But the West has lately developed a new science, the science of Psychology, which has evoked much popular interest in human personality and its management. This new science might prove to be a most natural bridge between the East and the West. The concept of man is also capable of throwing an interesting reconciling light on these different cultures of the East and the West. If we take 'man' integrally, as an organisation of body, life, mind and soul and seek for him the fullest possible satisfaction through the development of them all, then we find that each one of the cultures of the East and the West answers in a special measure to some particular aspect of human personality and thus makes a contribution to the growth of an integral culture of the integral man.

The concept of man is indeed a most happy approach to the subject of cultural rapprochement and synthesis. However, in pursuing such rapprochement we must primarily aim at truth and an integral cultural advancement. A comparative appraisal and assessment of different cultural attainments must be maintained as a secondary strain intended to help the achievement of the fuller and the larger truth on the whole. The attitude of self justification and pride will evidently be a serious handicap in the way of further progress for the culture concerned as also its rapprochement with others.

It is usually the spirit of self-justification and pride or unprogressiveness combined with a partial concept of human personality and its possibilities that creates the gulf between man and man. A seeking for the most comprehensive and highest cultural life will by itself create a desire to learn

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and profit from the cultural gain of others. If we consider cultures in this large-minded way, we will find that the modern West has made a unique kind of cultural advancement, which is a permanent human value. Its discovery of science, technology and methods of organisation have helped to raise the general standard of life in mankind. The East has more specifically sought a cultivation of the Spirit, an inner enrichment of consciousness through contemplation and meditation. And the Greeks had sought with intensity and dedication the ideal of truth, beauty and goodness.

If we relate these cultural pursuits to the different parts or aspects of human personality, that of body, life, mind and the spirit, the four principal parts, we will find that the modern western culture has primarily sought to raise the standard of our 'life' and 'body' parts. It has struggled to evolve methods for a better satisfaction of our wants and raising the general norm of living. The Greeks had sought an intensive culture of the mind and its pursuits of truth, beauty and goodness. The East has above all sought the splendours of the spirit, but this it has done, at least in the more recent centuries, in an exclusive sort of way, which regarded the other parts of personality with disrespect and derision. The Spirit in truth is the most comprehensive fact of personality, it includes the rest, it does not reject them. The character of the spiritual experience, which is not limited by unnecessary preconceptions, is a complete evidence of its comprehensiveness.

Thus considered these different cultures appear to have made essential contributions to the growth and enrichment of the integral culture of man and, therefore, they are evidently complementary in character. But obviously our conception of man should be truly integral and our will for an integral culture too clear and full. Then alone can we see how human history has even unconsciously worked for a common advancement of man and how each cultural adventure has been a real contribution. The philosophies of education are always intimately connected with the basic concept of man and if the different cultures, which have grown up on distinctive concepts of man, have been valuable contributions, then the different philosophies of education too, showing how the related aspects of personality can be developed, will constitute distinct contributions, and they could be availed of for the growth of an integral education of the integral man.

Cultural rapprochement of East and West and attempts at a World Philosophy are most significant developments of the recent times. They

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unmistakably show the world's conscious and unconscious desire to achieve unity in its life and working. Fortunately for these attempts, we have in Sri Aurobindo a personality, whose primary issue of life was a real and original creation of an integral culture of man. Romain Rolland, the well-known savant, had truly characterised him as "the most complete synthesis achieved upto the present between the genius of the West and of the East." His life's aspiration, thought and the intensive cultural work he carried on were all related to the subject of human culture and world peace. And by natural disposition and training he had been, as it were, specially prepared for this task. He spent his early formative years in England and received the best western education. And he had, besides, a strong instinct for spiritual life. Western education, spirit of free inquiry and spiritual perception set the stage for his life's work and he truly succeeded in giving to the present-day world what it most needs and seeks. We have in his writings a most revealing picture of life, which proceeds from an original cultural motive of its own, but perhaps by reason of the comprehensiveness of the motive, it seems to take up within its wide compass the different cultural seekings and attainments and gives them a larger and a fuller orientation. This motive is referred to above as the fullest perfectibility of the integral man. In fact, this motive led him to the exploration of the superconscious or the higher spiritual ranges of personality, because the discipline, training and the mastery of the conscious and the subconscious give at best a limited power and development. It is through the progressive growth of the spiritual ranges of our experience that our body, life, and mind receive yet higher organisation and orientation, giving them new powers of dealing with their problems.

Sri Aurobindo called the spirituality, which rejected life and the world, partial and untrue to its character. The world is, in fact, an evolving expression of a spiritual Reality and, therefore, obviously a wide opportunity for the realisation and enjoyment of spiritual values. Spirituality can then be no introverted living, as it sometimes tends to become. It is however a life lived from within, lived from inner inspiration, guidance and government rather than under the pressure of external necessities.

Thus contemplation and work are not contradictory. They are complementary to each other for their full development. So are all external organisation, technology, and scientific research a necessary objective correlate to subjective experience. Properly oriented they will fulfil mutually, taken by themselves they become false and misleading. Western science

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through its abstraction from the wholeness of spiritual experience has landed mankind in a situation, where divisions and distinctions created by the analytical reason cry for a harmonisation. And a spirituality abstracted from the objective social and material realities had led to a sorry state of general life in the East. An integral conception of human personality and its well-being will obviously give the best flowering of life and culture as a whole.

It was the same abstracted spirituality that had conceived of Reality as a static fact. The integral Reality is essentially a dynamic force, guiding and governing an evolving world, a world that is progressively bringing into realisation higher and higher qualities of consciousness. Individuality too is an essential spiritual value. Through inner spiritual living man ceases to be a plaything of circumstances. He becomes truly himself. However this selfhood and individuality are not of the ego, which is continually struggling against a non-ego; it is of the soul, which knows itself as an integral part of the whole world and contributing to its common purposes.

That indicates the way to our much-vexed question of world peace too. On the basis of the ego as our selfhood, whether individual or national, it is but natural that we should find a non-ego set against us, evoking in us fear, anxiety, suspicion and aggression. The unities that we thus achieve will rest upon these emotions and will, therefore, be shaky structures. It is only when the selfhood of soul, which knows itself as an integral part of the whole world and which sees and enjoys its own unity with the rest, becomes a dynamic ideal before the world that our seeking for world peace will get its proper footing.

Sri-Aurobindo's thought is a most natural and original synthesis of the principal inspirations and trends of the cultures of the East and the West. It shows them their limitations as also the way of their integral progress and fulfilment. And in seeing these, their limitations and integral fulfilment, they can easily recognise themselves as co-workers in a common cause of general human growth and enrichment.

INDRA SEN

SRI AUROBINDO'S POETRY¹

MYSTIC, philosopher, seer, and sage, Sri Aurobindo has been the subject of many books and monographs. Scores of persons hold him in high regard—on this side idolatry. He has soared to heights and delved to depths far beyond the reach and ken of the ordinary man. What we tend to forget, in the blaze of his divine philosophy, is that he had himself said once that he had been first and foremost a poet and a politician, and only later became a Yogi. In his "Biographia Literaria", Coleridge observes that no man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher. Dr. Cousins speaks of Sri Aurobindo as the philosopher as poet. In this paper the literary rather than the philosophic aspect of his poetry is to be touched on, partly because Sri Aurobindo's achievement as a literary artist is not sufficiently recognised, but mainly because I have no philosophy in me!

Aurobindo's literary career extended from 1890 to 1944.² During this long period there was hardly a time when his Muse was silent. And how prolific was her gift! As far as I have discovered, he wrote poetry neither in Sanskrit nor in Bengali,³ but only in English. Of English verse he has used many forms—the couplet, blank verse, the sonnet, the quatrain, and he has experimented also with quantitative verse. In each medium he has attained high technical skill. He has made admirable translations from Sanskrit and Bengali³ and has poems on themes based on European classical literature. Art is sometimes regarded as being very different from, if indeed not hostile to religion and morality. It gives pleasure and must therefore be suspect. Milton, the most serious and moral of English poets, used the phrase "simple, sensuous, and impassioned", in relation to poetry; and puritans condemn all that is impassioned and sensual. Sri Aurobindo's art is both sensual and impassioned, and in some rare instances, also simple. The Oxford Dictionary defines Art as "skill displaying itself in perfection

¹ Presidential address on the 83rd birthday of Sri Aurobindo, August 15, 1954 under the auspices of the Sri Aurobindo Study Centre, Banaras.

² He was writing even before and after.—Ed.

³ He wrote in Sanskrit and in Bengali also.—Ed.

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of workmanship, perfection of execution as an object in itself." Perhaps, according to this definition, Sri Aurobindo's work may not be regarded to be art, as there is hardly a poem of his which depends for its appeal on mere perfection of workmanship. One may question if this is true of any genuine work of art, of any piece of sculpture, any painting, a song, or a dance movement. Perfection of workmanship there must be, of course, but it must lead to a contraction in the heart, a sensation in the pit of the stomach, an exaltation, a sigh or a shout or a sob. A sunset-touch, a fancy from a flower-bell, a chorus-ending from Euripides—these are not merely enough for fifty hopes and fears, but also supply a sensation and an experience that remain our permanent possessions.

Sri Aurobindo was at one time deeply interested in politics. In 1902 he first came in contact with a group of revolutionaries, and a few years later started writing for "Yugantar". In 1908 he was arrested and lodged in Alipore Jail. On his release he started the two weeklies, "Karmayogin" and "Dharma". In 1910 he went from Chandernagore to Pondicherry, where he lived for the rest of his life. In 1914 he advised Motilal Roy to give up his revolutionary activities. In 1922, C. R. Das urged Sri Aurobindo to return to politics, but he refused, saying that he was after a higher reality and that if he should return, it would be after attaining a new poise which would help to give a fresh orientation to everything. He wrote to Baptista in 1920: "I do not look upon politics as inferior nor do I think that I have now outgrown them. I have always emphasised spiritual life and I am doing that much more fully now....What is now going on in the political field seems to differ much from what I would like to do. My sole object during 1903-10 was to create among the people a will to be free and to divert the energies of Congress from the useless ways that it was following into self-reliant and militant channels....I believe that India has a soul, has a genius of its own. I generally subscribe to principles of some kind of social democracy. But they should be in tune with the traditions and culture of India". This long extract has been quoted in order to express surprise that during the many years of poetic activity, even when he was deeply involved in political work, Sri Aurobindo did not write any poem of note either on contemporary political events or leaders or on the enemies of freedom. It almost appears as if he reserved for poetry a region where politics dared not soar, as if in poetry he sought to recapture a vision of the past that grows not old and to remember at the going down of the sun and in the mornings the stories and legends and myths of ancient India and ancient

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Greece, as if familiar matter of today, pride, pomp, and circumstance¹ of the Boer War or the first World War, the flame of freedom in human souls, might be good enough in their own way, but not sublime enough or noble enough or rarefied enough for his poetic Muse. This may be considered to be a drawback. It may be argued that his poetry has chosen an artificially restricted region as its demesne, that it is not co-extensive with life. All this may be true; he may not have been cradled into poetry by wrong; and he may not simply tell the most heart-easing things. But we have to consider a man's work within the frame-work fixed by him, judge of his achievement in the light of what he sets forth to achieve. We shall do well to recognise that Sri Aurobindo has no place for politics or for contemporary happenings in his poetry. These were not ignored or forgotten, but figured prominently in his letters and in his journalistic work. The only poems that have a political tinge were written while he was still a student in England and do not concern India, but Ireland. Here is an epitaph on the tragic hero of Irish politics, Parnell:

"O pale and guiding light, now star unsphered,
Deliverer lately hailed, since by our lords
Most feared, most hated, hated because feared,
Who smot'st them with an edge surpassing swords!
Thou too wert then a child of tragic earth,
Since vainly filled thy luminous doom of birth."

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Of quite a number of Aurobindo's poems, the theme is Love. He might almost have said with Herrick:

"Love is a circle that doth restless move
In the same sweet eternity of love".

This is significant and curious, for one cannot discover that in the poet's life love had any considerable share—love for parents, for friends, for brother, or for wife. And yet some of his best pieces, both lyric and narrative, concern love, and Kalidasa's drama translated by him is also on this subject.

¹ There are some poems on contemporary circumstances.—Ed.

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Love, Nature, and the World of the Mind and the Self—these govern his song and are their still recurring burthen. In one of his earliest poems are lines such as:

“O wondrous day,
That crowned the bliss of those delicious years.
The vernal radiance of my lover's lips
Was shut like a red rose upon my mouth,
His voice was richer than the murmuring leaves,
His love around me than the summer air.”

And here is a rendering from Meleager, entitled, “A Rose of Women”:

“Now lilies blow upon the windy height,
Now flowers the pansy kissed by tender rain,
Narcissus builds his house of self-delight
And love's own fairest flower blooms again;
Vainly your gems, O meadows, you recall;
One simple girl breathes sweeter than you all.”

And this, “Radha's Complaint in Absence”, imitated from Chandidas:

“Friend of my soul, who then has called love sweet?
Laughing I called from heavenly spheres
The sweet love close; he came with flying feet
And turned my life to tears.”

and next, “Seasons.”:

“Day and night begin, you tell me,
When the Sun may choose to set or rise,
Well, it may be; but for me their changing
Is determined only by her eyes.
Summer, spring, the fruitless winter,
Hinge, you say, upon the heavenly sun?
Oh, but I have known a yearlong winter!
Spring was by her careless smiles begun.”

One can select many more pieces. It is sufficient to say, here is God's plenty. Perhaps the best passage with which to end this section is the following from

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the poem entitled: "The Rishi". It is the advice of the Rishi of the Pole to king Manu:

"Shrink not from life, O Aryan, but with mirth
And joy receive
His good and evil, sin and virtue; till
He bids thee leave.
But while thou livest, perfectly fulfil
Thy part, conceive
Earth as thy stage, thyself the actor strong,
The drama His.
Work, but the fruits to God alone belong,
Who only is.
Work, love, and know,—so shall thy spirit win
Immortal bliss.
Love men, love God. Fear not to love, O king,
Fear not to enjoy;
For Death's a passage, grief a fancied thing
Fools to annoy.
From self escape and find in love alone
A higher joy."

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External nature, its sights and smells, its mildness and its grandeur, its energy and its unending variety, has inspired many of Aurobindo's poems. He does not treat it merely as an external scene, but as a vital part of the general scheme of the universe. He muses on nature with a poet's eye and with the ardour, the thrill of a lover. He listens to the voice of nature and finds in it much to elevate, to soothe, to instruct. It is not distant or apart, and certainly not red in tooth and claw.

EVENING

O golden evening, when the thoughtful sun
Rejects its usual pomp in going, trees
That bend down to their green companion
And fruitful mother, vaguely whispering,—these

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And a wide silent sea. Such hour is nearest God,—
Like rich old age when the long ways have all been trod.

THE OTHER EARTHS

An irised multitude of hills and seas,
And glint of brooks in the green wilderness,
And trackless stars, and mirrored symphonies
Of hues that float in ethers shadowless,
A dance of fire-flies in the fretted gloom,
In a pale midnight the moon's silver flare,
Fire-importunities of scarlet bloom
And bright suddenness of wings in a golden air,
Strange bird and animal forms like memories cast
On the rapt silence of unearthly woods,
Calm faces of the Gods on backgrounds vast
Bringing the marvel of the infinitudes,
Through glimmering veils of wonder and delight
World after world bursts on the awakened sight."

and finally, this from "Urvashie":

"Wast thou not a part
Of soft auspicious evenings I have loved?
Have I not seen thy beauty on the clouds?
In moonlight and in starlight and in fire?
Some flower whose brightness was a trouble? a face
Whose memory like a picture lived with me?
A thought I had, but lost? O was thy voice
A vernal repetition in some grove,
Telling of lilies clustered o'er with bees
And quiet waters open to the moon?"

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Lastly, there is the large mass of verse which is metaphysical. Aurobindo has said, "The touch of the Earth is always reinvigorating to the son of Earth, even when he seeks a supraphysical knowledge. It may even be said that the supraphysical can only be really mastered in its fullness—to its heights we

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can always reach—when we keep our feet firmly on the physical”. But, as early as 1905, he wrote to his wife Mrinalini: “The second madness that has recently taken hold of me is, happen what may, I must see God face to face, whatever the means.” Some sentences from his letter to Barindra written in 1920, may be quoted as giving an indication of what Aurobindo was striving to achieve:

“The path of Sannyas that preaches Nirvana or complete renunciation lays the greatest stress on looking upon the body as a corpse. I do not think that worldly activities can be carried on with such an attitude towards the body. One must be able to find Ananda in everything—in body as in spirit. The body is full of consciousness, it is a manifestation of God. If one sees Bhagwan in everything in this world, if one realises that ‘all this is Brahman, everything is Vasudeva’, one enjoys universal bliss. When one attains this poise, he can carry on worldly affairs, marry, and do all one’s duties with a spiritual attitude. One visualises then the joyful manifestation of Bhagwan in all actions. Since long, I have been trying to transform all my experiences and all the objects of the senses as well as of the mind into joy. All that stuff now is assuming the form of supramental joy. It is in this condition of the consciousness that man realises the full vision and experience of Sat-Chit-Ananda....For the firm establishment of my Yoga, I wish to have vast, heroic equanimity; when consciousness is founded on that equanimity, I would like to have full, firm, and immovable Shakti or power; in that ocean of power I want the spread of the rays of the sun of knowledge; in that vastness of light there should be infinite love, joy, and the ecstasy of unitive experience.”

This long passage gives to us some idea of what Sri Aurobindo desired to achieve and is a necessary prelude to an understanding of much of his philosophical and mystic verse. It is this underlying belief that inspires a stanza such as:

“We will tell the whole world of His ways and His cunning:
He has rapture of torture and passion and pain;
He delights in our sorrow and drives us to weeping,
Then lures with His joy and His beauty again.”

Or these lines:

“Alone
Who rises above fear and plays with grief,
Defeat and death, inherits full relief

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From blindness and beholds the single form,
Love masking Terror, Peace supporting storm.
The Friend of Man helps him with Life and Death,
Until he knows. Then freed from mortal breath
He feels the joy of the immortal play;
Grief, pain, resentment, terror pass away.
He too grows Rudra, fierce, august and dire,
And Shiva, sweet fulfiller of desire."

And so, on the seraph-wings of ecstasy, the poet rode and stood free in the spirits silence and passing on measureless wings beyond Time and life was still one with born and unborn things. That vision is enough. It is knowledge and wisdom. That mystic experience, realised not by chance or intuition, but by strenuous, conscious effort, is the theme of several of the sonnets written during his last years. "The Golden Light" may be quoted:

"Thy golden light came down into my brain
And the grey worms of mind sun-touched became
A bright reply to Wisdom's occult plane,
A calm illumination and a flame.
Thy golden Light came down into my throat,
And all my speech is now a tune divine,
A paean song of thee my single note;
My words are drunk with the Immortal's wine.
The golden Light came down into my heart
Smiting my life with Thy eternity;
Now has it grown a temple where Thou art
And all its passions point towards only Thee.
Thy golden Light came down into my feet
My earth is now thy playfield and thy seat."

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The art of translation is difficult. Many have essayed it, but few have succeeded. It is specially difficult when the languages concerned are so distant from each other in diction, in tradition, in atmosphere; in the genius loci as Sanskrit and English. The difficulty is greater when poetry is to be translated into poetry. D. G. Rossetti says:

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"The work of the translator (and with all humility be it spoken) is one of some self-denial. Often would he avail himself of any special grace of his own idiom and epoch, if only his will belonged to him; often would some cadence serve him but for his author's structure—some structure but for his author's cadence. Now he would slight the matter for the music, and now the music for the matter; but no, he must deal to each alike. Sometimes, too, a flaw in the work galls him and he would fain remove it, doing for the poet that which his age denied him; but no,—it is not in the bond." A recent scholar has summed up the requirements thus:

"Linguistic knowledge and literary capacity are essential for every kind of translation; but Insight is just as indispensable. Some would construe 'insight' as 'sympathy' with the author, or they would add 'sympathy' thereto. If this sympathy means the appreciation which insight and study have produced, we may agree. But many who use the word intend something more emotional, such as admiration, love, or esteem.... Translating is an exercise of the intellect; and sentiment has no place in its performance."

One may object to the last sentence in Professor Postgate's paragraph, for while fidelity to the form may be achieved by mere intellect, fidelity to the substance cannot be attained without a genuine feeling of liking for the original.

First, we shall take up Sri Aurobindo's rendering of Bhartrihari's "Niti shataka." The first edition, brought out in 1924, by Mrinalini Chattopadhyaya's Shama Publishing House, is described as "The Niti Shataka of Bhartrihari freely rendered into English verse." The word "translated" is avoided, very wisely; 'translation' is transference, from one medium to another. The translator enjoys no latitude save that which will make the translation idiomatic and natural in the language into which it is made. Sri Aurobindo uses the word 'rendered', for it enables him to reproduce the impression produced by the original. A free rendering can be read for pleasure, as literature. A translation is a mechanical exercise to be read for curiosity. In a prefatory note, Aurobindo says:

"I had at first entitled the translation "The Century of Morals", but the Sanskrit word Niti has a more complex sense. It includes also policy and worldly wisdom, the rule of successful as well as the law of ideal conduct and gives scope for observation of all the turns and forces determining the movement of human character and actions".

SRI AUROBINDO'S POETRY

I shall quote a few verses to show how Aurobindo has managed to remain faithful to the original without sacrifice of elegance and naturalness.

(1)

अज्ञः सुखमाराध्यः सुखतरमाराध्यते विशेषज्ञः ।
ज्ञानलवदुर्विदग्धं ब्रह्मापि तं नरं न रञ्जयति ॥

Easily shalt thou the ignorant appease;
The wise more easily is satisfied;
But one who builds his raw and foolish pride
On a little lore not God Himself can please.

(2)

त्वमेव चातकाधार इति केषाञ्च गोचरः ।
विनाम्नोच्चर तस्यापि कार्पण्योक्तिं प्रतीक्षसे ॥

You opulent clouds that in high heavens ride,
Is't fame you seek? but surely all men know
To you the darting rainlarks homage owe.
Hold you then back your showers, because your pride
By cur low suings must be gratified?

Here there is free paraphrase to clarify the meaning.

लभेत सिकतासु तैलमपि यत्नतः पीडयन्
पिबेच्च मृगतृष्णिकासु सलिलं पिपासादितः ।
कदाचिदपि पर्यटन् शशविषाणमासादयेत्
न तु प्रतिनिविष्टमूर्खजनवित्तमाराधयेत् ॥

Nay, thou wilt find sweet oil in the sea-sands,
Press them but firmly in thy strenuous hands:
The desert-born mirage shall slake thy thirst,
Or wandering through the earth thou shalt be first
To find the horns of hares, who thinkst to school
With reason the prejudgments of the fool.

In this the poet has secured literalness without any sacrifice of grace.

कुसुमस्तम्बकस्येव द्वयी वृत्तिर्मनस्विनः ।
मूर्ध्नि वा सर्वलोकस्य शीर्यते वन एव वा ॥

To this verse the translator has given the title, Aut Caesar aut Nullus;

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Two fates alone strong, haughty minds endure,
Of worth convinced;—on the world's forehead proud
Singly to bloom exalted o'er the crowd,
Or wither in the wilderness obscure.

Apart from Bhartrihari, Aurobindo has translated also Kalidasa's "Vikramorvashiyam", under the title "The Hero and the Nymph". It appeared in 1911. It is entirely in blank verse. I may advert here for a moment and remark on the wonderful mastery which the poet has over this medium. Indeed, after Tennyson, the only other modern writer besides Aurobindo who has used it with equal skill is T.S.Eliot. Here are a few illustrations:

FROM THE HERO AND THE NYMPH

I am all weary and sad. Oh, let me rest
Beside this mountain river for a moment
And woo the breeze that dances on the waves.
All turbid is this stream with violent rain,
And yet I thrill to see it. For, O, it seems
Just like my angry darling when she went
Frowning—as this does with its little waves,—
A wrathful music in her girdle—and see!
This string of birds with frightened clangour rise;
She trailed her raiment as the river its foam,
For it loosened with her passion as she moved
With devious feet, all angry, blind with tears,
And often stopped to brood upon her wrongs:
But soon indignantly her stormy speed
Resumed, tripping, winding goes the stream,
As she did."

This, in a different vein, energetic and vividly descriptive, from

BAJI PRABHOU

"At once—
The muskets clamoured out, the bullets sped,
Deadly though few; again and yet again,
And some of the impetuous faltered back
And some in wrath pressed on; and while they swayed
Poised between flight and onset, blast on blast

SRI AUROBINDO'S POETRY

The volleyed death invisible hailed in
Upon uncertain ranks."

Two passages from *Urvashie* are Miltonic, first in the melody imparted by proper names, and next in the use of the Homeric simile:

"So danced they numberless as dew-drops gleam,
Menaca, Misracayshie, Mullica,
Rumbha, Nelabha, Shela, Nolinie,
Lolita, Lavonya, and Tilottama—
Many delightful names; among them she."

"As when a man to the grey face of dawn
Awaking from an unremembered dream,
Rapines at life awhile and buffets back
The wave of old familiar thoughts, and hating
His usual happiness and usual cares
Strives to recall a dream's felicity;—
Long strives in vain and rolls his painful thought
Through many alien ways, when sudden comes
A flash, another, and the vision burns
Like lightning in the brain, so leaped that name
Into the musing of the troubled king."

I have not referred to his "Savitri"—his magnum opus, described by the poet as "a legend and a symbol". In the words of Sri R. R. Diwakar, "it contains more than mere logical language addressed to the intellect; we are face to face with a mighty soul that has coined its experiences into words of magic, and thrown them into the currency of the emotional world. Words and sounds on this plane are as winged angels, which carry us aloft and give us glimpses of the very secret of things." Nor have I dealt with his essay on the Quantitative Metre and the reason of past failures. The poet admits that the attempt to introduce quantitative metres into English has failed and that it was predestined to failure, as it is something alien to the rhythm of the language. He arrives at the conclusion, however; "If the difficulty of the hexameter can be successfully overcome, no insuperable impossibility need be met in the naturalisation of other classical metres, for the harmonic principle will be the same....It would be a mistake to cling to rigid scholarly

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correction in the process; these metres must submit to the natural law of English poetry, to movements and liberties which the classical rules do not admit, to modulation, to slight facilitating changes of form, to the creation of difficult models of itself, as there are different models of the sonnet”.

... ..
A critic, writing in the *Times Literary Supplement*, says: “It cannot be said that Aurobindo shows any organic adaptation to music and melody. His thought is profound; his technical devices are commendable, but the music that enchants or disturbs is not there.” Two small lyrics are an adequate answer to this criticism:

REVELATION

Someone leaping from the rocks
Past me ran with wind-blown locks
Like a startled bright surmise
Visible to mortal eyes,—
Just a cheek of frightened rose
That with a sudden beauty glows,

Just a footstep like the wind
And a hurried glance behind,
And then nothing,—as a thought
Escapes the mind ere it is caught.
Someone of the heavenly rout
From behind the veil ran out.

THE LITTLE MORE

One day, and all the half-dead is done;
One day, and all the unborn begun;
A little path and the great goal,
A touch that brings the divine whole.
Hill after hill was climbed and now,
Behold; the last tremendous brow
And the great rock that none has trod:
A step, and all is sky and God.”

AMARANATHA JHA

THE MARUTS IN THE VEDA

WE have seen, in our previous study¹, that in their psychological aspect, the Maruts are the aspiring forces in man, powers that are born of life and attain to the light of the purer mind. Combining in themselves the swiftnesses characteristic of Vayu, the God of the Life-plane and the strength and force of Rudra who is their sire, it is the Maruts who give the necessary nerve-strengths, speed and drive to the inner being of the Vedic mystic in the ascent of his Yajna, Sacrifice, to the Goal of Immortality. As children of Aditi, the Infinite Consciousness extended in the etheric spaces, they are primarily the gods of the mid-region, *antariṣa* the world of life; but they arrive at their full stature only when they reach the heights of the mind proper and impart their energisms to the thought-movements seeking greater heights. They are always on the move in companies and are referred in sevens or multiples of seven, corresponding to the seven Planes in the hierarchy of Creation based on the seven Principles of Existence.

The Maruts are worthy of their birth.

*Stable, indeed, is their birth-place; the birds are able to issue from their mother; for their strength everywhere is twofold.*²

The strength of the Maruts, says the seer, is not confined to one region. It is spread everywhere. It is twofold, the power of knowledge and the power of action.³ The Maruts possess these two elements of knowledge and activity because of the very nature of their origin of birth. Though their mother, Prishni, is the source and field for the variegated play of the Life-force, she contains also in her womb the multitude of thought-powers; such is the greatness of their origin; it is *dhruva*, solid and firm, excellent.⁴ The

¹ *Sri Aurobindo Circle Annual* No. X

² स्थिरम् हि जोनमेषां वयो मातुर्निरेतवे । यत् सीमन् द्विता शवः ॥ (RV. I. 37.9)

Unless otherwise mentioned, all English renderings of Riks in this Paper are adapted from the available translations by Griffith, Max Muller, Wilson etc.

³ प्रज्ञाबलं बाहुबलं च (Raghavendraswami: *Mantrārthamānjari*)

⁴ स्थिरत्वेन उत्तमतां लक्षयति (*ibid*)

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birds are the thought-powers. In the Veda we find many instances where these powers of thought are described as birds;¹ and birds here symbolise “energies...liberated and upsoaring, winging upward towards the heights of our being, winging widely with a free light, no longer involved in the ordinary limited movement” (Sri Aurobindo). They are so much instinct with the strength of their supporting life-energy that they are able to soar straight the moment they are born. Thus do the Maruts carry with them the double characteristic of their fount of origin—consciousness as force and consciousness as knowledge.

The same truth is emphasised by another Rishi.

*Here, here, ye of self-grown strength, seers with skin of Sun's splendour,
O Maruts, I dedicate to you this sacrifice.*²

The strength of the Maruts is their own, they do not derive their sustenance from outside. Their very substance is of strength, the force of life which in its native character knows no diminution. Its nature is to expand, to grow. And they are not merely of this self-growing strength. They are *kavayah*, seers, *krānta darsinah*, says Sayana; they who see what is *beyond*; they are endowed with the knowledge-vision that transcends the senses; not only that, their very skin is of the light, the splendour of the Sun who stands, in the Veda, for the Supreme Truth and Knowledge. The Rays of this Sun of Truth, the spreadings of the Knowledge constitute the stuff of their natural covering. To such, says the Rishi, to such embodiments of Force and Knowledge, he dedicates the sacrifice of his life-endeavour, *here, here, here* now on earth.

“The Rishi says: ‘Oh you Maruts, you gods are *svatavasah*, grown of your own strength, *kavayah*, seers, *surya-tvacah*, the splendour of the Sun itself is your covering and protective skin; to you, such as these, I dedicate today the sacrifice.’ Now how could these seers—those who look beyond the past and the present and as such endowed with consciousness, be mere natural phenomenon of storms, entities without consciousness?” (Sri Kapali Sastry)³

There is a constant emphasis on their quality of strength. Deriving as

¹ E.g. I. 88.1, I. 87.2, VII. 56.3. (Rig Veda)

² इहेह वः स्वतवसः कवयः सूर्यत्वचः । यज्ञं मरुत आ वृणो ॥ (RV. VII. 59.11)
Translation by Sri Kapali Sastry.

³ *Rig Veda Bhashya* p. 69

THE MARUTS IN THE VEDA

they do from the plane of Life which is the reservoir of all dynamic energies the Maruts are filled with strength as a matter of course.

*O ye of unfailing strength, make That manifest; strike the fiend with your lustrous might.*¹

The Maruts, the seer declares, have a strength which never fails to effectuate itself: it is true strength. It is lustrous like everything else that concerns the Maruts. He appeals to them to strike down the enemy, the evil ones who oppose, and thus clear the way. Way for what? To manifest *That*, to bring into play the Great Light of which the subsequent Rik speaks,² the Light which is the source of all Knowledge and Truth-Power.

Or again,

Bounteous givers, whole strength have ye, shakers (of earth), perfect in your blazing might.

*Maruts, against the wrathful enemy of the seers, let loose an enemy like a dart.*³

Their strength is whole; it is not lacking in completeness. Limitation of any kind does not mar it. It is because of this fullness of strength that they are able to give fully, bounteously. The throb of their force shakes every thing around: the earth, i.e. the body of the worshipper trembles at the impact of their vibrant power. Their might which is brilliant with the glow of the informing Light is perfect in its sweep. To such exemplars of Strength and Might, the Rishi prays for action against the enemies of the seers, the forces of darkness and ignorance who are up in arms in anger against the worshipper,—mark the significant word *ṛṣi*, one who sights the liberating word—who is finding the means to free himself from their hold. He prays to the Maruts to let loose against them something of their enormous strength which is sure to strike and be effective as a pointed missile against an adversary.

If the Maruts are known for their unparalleled strength, they are no less distinguished for their wisdom. The hymns in the Rig Veda repeat again

¹ यूयं तत् सत्यशवस आविष्कर्त महित्वना । विध्यता विद्युता रक्षः ॥ (RV. I. 86.9)

² Vide next instalment of the article

³ असाम्योजो विभृथा सुदानवोऽसामि धृतयः शवः ।

ऋषिद्विषे मरुतः परिमन्यव इधुं न सृजत द्विषम् ॥ (RV. I. 39.10)

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and again that these gods are *kavayah*, seers, their activities are governed by a lofty knowledge which is specially theirs. Here for instance is a Rik of Nodhas:

Grant us, O ye Maruts, wealth, durable, rich in prowess and speeding the fleeing foe. A hundred, yea, thousandfold, ever increasing!

*May the host of the Maruts, Thought-wealthy, come soon and anon.*¹

The Maruts are *dhiyāvasu*, an epithet the Rishi uses in more than one Rik. Their wealth lies in their Thought. No doubt they are born of the substance of life and are primarily life-powers. Still, as Sri Aurobindo says, they are effective on the mental, the thought-plane. They begin their characteristic action when they grow and move on the heights of the mind, acquire the birth-right of the Thought-land, themselves filling the region with their innate dynamis. This Thought, the characteristic movement or expression of the Consciousness that is at work as Intelligence on this level in creation is brought into manifestation and fuller play by the Maruts; it is their wealth that the seer describes in significant adjectives which cannot apply to ordinary material wealth. It is durable; it is not fleeting and exhaustible. The substance of Thought rooted at its secret base in a principle of Infinite Knowledge exceeds the limitations of finite Space and Time. It has a dynamic power, charged with the impetuosity of the life-energies that have risen and joined to it. This element of force, apart from the Power which is inalienable from all true Thought, enables it to drive away the enemy, the darkness and ignorance vanishing with the dawn of Knowledge. It is hundred, thousandfold i.e. it is varied, complete, not wanting in wholeness.² Even full, it does not stop content with its fullness; that is the feature of things in the lower creation of *tamas* and inertia. From fullness it pours into a greater fullness; the heights of the mental summits have no end; they go on expanding and ever expanding.³ Such is the wealth for which the Maruts are known and of them the seer beseeches an early call at the altar of his soul.

¹ नू ष्ठिरं मरुतो वीरवन्मृतीषां ह रयिमस्मासु धत्त ।
सहस्रिणं शतिनं शूशुवांसं प्रातर्मक्षू विद्यावसुर्जगम्यात् ॥ (RV. I. 64.15)

² रायः . . . न यो युच्छति . . . सहस्रिणं । wealth in thousands which never vanishes (RV. V. 54.13)

³ अस्या धियः प्रावितो (The host of Maruts) increaser of our intellect (RV. I. 87.4)

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Or to take another Rik:

*They carry with them the sweetness (of Ananda) as their eternal offspring, and play out their play brilliant in the activities of knowledge.*¹

With the harmony attained between the swell of life-energy and the poise of the purified mental Thought open to Knowledge—which is what the awakening and play of the Maruts mean in the seeker—there is a natural outflow of happiness, a streaming of sweet joy which always accompanies the manifestation of the Maruts; they are *mayobhuvah* giving birth to Delight. But they do not rest tranquil in the enjoyment of this ananda. They are essentially powers of movement, *yayiyah*,² powers that seek and embody, seek yet more and manifest. Theirs is the play of the winning and the giving of the treasures of Knowledge, of Light, which are massed on the heights of the Divine Mind.³ They win the illuminations of higher Knowledge and make them effective and active in the person of the sacrificer.⁴ In the words of Sri Aurobindo: The Maruts “are energies which make for knowledge. Theirs is not the settled truth, the diffused light, but the movement, the search, the lightning flash, and, when Truth is found, the many-sided play of its separate illuminations.”

The might of the Maruts is irresistible because it is of another nature than that of the human kind.

*Passing glorious must be your warrior might, not the guileful strength of the mortal.*⁵

The prowess of man, however great it could be, is after all rooted in ignorance, in limited and even malformed knowledge that is falsehood; as long as he lives under their rule his actions continue to be coloured with that infirmity of nature. The might of the Maruts, the seer says, is not of that nature; it is free from the falsity of appearances, it has the nobility of

¹ नित्यं न सुनुं मधु बिभ्रत उप कीळत्ति कीळां विदथेबु घृष्वयः । (RV. I. 166.2)

Tr. Sri Aurobindo

² RV. X. 78.7

³ ददाशुषे दिवः कोशम् चुच्यवुः they have cast the Heaven's treasury down for the worshipper's behoof. (RV. V. 53.6.)

⁴ विदयेबु घीराः ‘wise thinkers in the discoveries of knowledge’ (RV. III. 26.1.)

⁵ युष्माकमस्तु तविषी पनीयसी मा मर्त्यस्य मायिनः । (RV. I. 39.2)

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warrior-make, it has a directness derived from its source in Truth,¹ and is hence supremely adorable, *atīṣayena stōtavyam* (Sayana), unlike the tainted human kind. These purified life-powers and thought-powers are not subject to the limiting and twisting holds of *Māyā* that so much characterise the formations on the physical plane. Theirs is the course of a large freedom moving towards the Law of the Truth.

Maruts, bright yourselves, bright are the offerings; to you the bright, I offer the bright sacrifice.

*By Law they came to Truth, the observers of Law, of happy birth, bright, purifiers.*²

The Maruts are bright, gleaming in their purity of form, and the offerings of the worshipper to be acceptable to them have to be of appropriate purity; they must be full of the light of the higher consciousness attained by the offerer, bright. The bright gods presiding over the purified and purifying energies on the life and the mental levels of the seeker will accept only the sacrifice that is aglow with the fire of aspiration. They arrive at the Truth, the Truth that is at the head of things, the Truth of themselves and the Truth of what is beyond them, by the *ṛtam*, the Law, the Right, the Way of the Truth-working. They are the observers of the Law; they move effortlessly on the Path of the Right and fail not to arrive at the Goal of the Truth. One who delivers himself into their hands is speeded up on this Path; happy is the moment when they are born in man,³ for then it is possible for him to entrust his sacrifice to the charge of these toiling divinities who purify under the stress of their surging movement and brighten with their own lustre of knowledge and power the inner being of the Yajamana set for the upward climb.

The same characteristics of the Maruts find expression in the utterance of another Rishi:

Ho, Maruts, Heroes, be gracious unto us, rich in treasures, immortal, knowers of the Law.

¹ अरेपसः ऋतजाताः (RV. V. 61.14)

² शुची वो हव्या मरुतः शुचीनां शुचिं हिनोम्यध्वरं शुचिभ्यः।

ऋतेन सत्यमृतस्य जायञ्छुचिजन्मानः शुचयः पावकाः ॥ (RV. VII. 56.12)

³ भद्रजानयः whose births make for happy good (RV. V. 61.4)

THE MARUTS IN THE VEDA

*Ye hearers of the Truth, seers, youthful, of mighty speech, grown mighty.*¹

The Maruts are spoken of in their many-sided opulence. They abound in treasures, their own wealth of kine and horses, of knowledge and power; they hold in themselves the truth of immortality into which it is open to their worshipper to grow. They are *knowers*, they know the Divine Law which governs All. They are *satyaśrutah*, they who *hear* the Truth, who are open to the divine audition, the inspirations of Truth. They are also *seers*, the Wise ones that see with the eye of knowledge² through the barriers of Time and Space; they are full of youth, getting their sustenance from the ever-fresh fount of the waters of life-energies. Their speech, their voice is powerful, it cannot be kept back,³ their echoing utterances are mighty of result.⁴ Full of their varied plenitude they grow ever and ever mightier for the benefit of the supplicant who waits upon their pleasure.

The weapons of the Maruts, the means wherewith they destroy and build are as varied as they are spectacular. Their speech itself is a force of consequence.

Sing glory to the host of Maruts, brilliant, leaning to our praises, they of the flaming Word;

*May they be exalted here in us.*⁵

Theirs is the *Word* which signifies a concentrated expression of spiritual force in a sound-body. The voice of the Maruts is loaded with the power of the flaming Word, they are the singers of the Word, *brahmāno marutah*, which breaks into the strongholds of the elements that oppose the onward progress of man and shatters their ramparts of blindness and obscurity. These Gods of the purified life and mind energies, not only break down the evil by the force of their speech but also affirm and help to establish the Truth in the being of the seeker by its power; the being of the Yajamana

¹ हये नरो मरुतो मृळता नस्तुवीमवासो अमृतो ऋतज्ञाः ।

सत्यश्रुतः कवयो युवानो बृहद्गिरयो बृहदुक्षमाणाः ॥ (RV. V. 58.8)

² सूरचक्षसः (Yajurveda 25.20)

³ न यो वराय मेस्तामिव स्वनः (RV. I.143.4)

⁴ *Brhad-girayah* has been also translated as dwelling on lofty mountains. These Powers attain to their full status and acquire individuation on the higher altitudes—the summits of the Mind—of the Hill of being; they are their natural habitat.

⁵ वन्दस्व मारुतं गणं त्वेषं पतस्युर्मर्किणम् । अस्मे वृद्धा असन्निह ॥ (RV. I. 38.15)

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has to learn to put itself in tune with the music of these leaders of the journey if it would be wafted along in their brilliant course. "The shining host has arisen in my soul, the host of the Thought-gods and they sing a hymn as they march upward, a hymn of the heart's illumination. March thou on, O my soul, impetuously to their violent and mighty music. For they are drunk with the joy of an inspiration...their thunders are the chant of the hymn of the gods and the proclamations of the Truth." (Sri Aurobindo).

The Maruts of the illumined Word, says the seer, are avid of worship. They look for the heart's adoration and its expression in speech from the worshipper because that is the one sure means whereby they can enter in communication and grow in his person with all the untold beneficence that goes with them. By that they will be exalted, their sway will increase in us, the Rishi says, here itself, *iha*, in the sacrifice which is in progress.

By the *word*, by their chants of power, the Maruts invoke the still higher godheads and their gifts upon the Sacrifice, upon the worshipper in whom they have been awakened into activity.

*Who are brave, unsurpassed in strength, who laud in worship, O Agni, with them, the Maruts come.*¹

The Rishi calls upon Agni, the Seer-Will, to come to the sacrifice along with the Maruts who chant the Rik, celebrate the worship. Sayana would have it that *arka* is water;² Skandaswamin that it is Indra. In either case, as Sri Kapali Sastry points out, the fact remains that the *word* of the Maruts is a fulfilling agent in the inner sacrifice of the Yajamana.³ "Brothers of Indra, the brave Maruts are able to raise the word (of the Yajamana) to a high intensity of power, to reach to Indra the showerer of all wealth, or, to impel the currents of the Divine Powers symbolised by the *Waters*."⁴

*Creators of speech, they spread out wide the Waters in their courses; they urge the lowing kine to enter (the Waters) up to their knees.*⁵

¹ य उग्रा अर्कमानुचरनाधृष्टास ओजसा । मरुद्भिरग्न आ गहि ॥ (RV. I. 19.4)

² Vide Max Muller's Note: "Sayana explains *arka* by water....But *arka* has only received this meaning of water in the artificial system of interpretation first started by the authors of the Brahmanas, who had lost all knowledge of the natural sense of the ancient hymns."

³ Vide also RV. I. 52.15 where the Maruts are referred to as stirring Indra with their lauds when he is engaged in battle with the Enemy, Vritra the leading Force that obstructs.

⁴ *Rig Veda Bhashya* P. 219

⁵ उदुत्ये सूनवो गिरः काष्ठा अग्नेष्वत्नत । वाश्रा अभिज्ञु यातवे ॥ (RV. I. 37.10)

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The Maruts have set out on their courses. They are the impellers, the creators of speech with which they fill the regions of their movement. Their speech, says the seer, is the precursor, the actuating cause of a development which has a special significance to the seeker. These companions of Indra, the Lord of the worlds who has the bounty of rain in his giving, initiate the downpour and spread out the Waters. The Waters signify the currents of Consciousness-Force which irrigate and fertilise the fields of the being of the worshipper. His path is flooded with these streams of Waters and the lowing *cows*, the infant rays of light which are beginning to show themselves on the horizons of the highest attained levels of the seeker are urged by the Maruts with their impelling Words, to enter,—go in knee-deep and not stand out on the edge—into the Waters and drink and grow on their substance.¹

There are numerous passages in the Rig Veda extolling the part of the Maruts in bringing down to the Earth the Waters² from Indra's world of Svar. They join Indra in their troops, increase his striking force with their powerful voice and irresistible strength and aid him to fell down the Coverer; Vritra, and release the imprisoned Waters of Consciousness and Force to stream forth and rain on the arid soil of the worshipper's being.³ The Mystic looks to the Maruts to cause these Waters flow over not only those tracts of his existence which have been subjected to a continuous pressure of arduous discipline, *tapasya*, and prepared to fruitfully receive the showers from above, but also the other parts that remained unresponsive, too dry and lifeless to participate in the general progress.⁴ The streams which they pour down run in all directions, *viyadvartante enyah*,⁵ and the entire

¹ Western scholars have needlessly confounded themselves on this Rik. The construction and meaning given by Sayana is unusually straight. *Sūnavah* is to be taken, naturally, in the sense of impellers (*sū prerāṇe*); *vāca utpādakāḥ marutah*, as the scholiast says. Again, *kāṣṭha* is here water, not wooden poles or enclosures as taken by some. Sayana quotes Yaska in justification: *āpopi kāṣṭha ucyante krāntvā stithā bhavati* (Nirukta 2.15)

² यूयं वृष्टिं वर्षयथा पुरीषिणः Ye of Waters, pour the torrents down. (RV. V. 55.5)

Vide also सर्गा वर्षस्य वर्षतो वर्षन्तु पृथिवीमनु May the Waters shed by the Maruts flow to the Earth. (Atharva 4.15)

The Maruts themselves are द्रप्साः, पुरुद्रप्साः dripping, dripping profusely.

³ अनुधन्वनायन्ति वृष्टयः showers follow over desert spots (RV. V. 53.6).

⁴ *Vide* शर्वो . . . मास्तंतुविष्वगिरप्नस्वतीषूर्वरास्विष्टनिरार्तानास्विष्टनिः an army of Life-Powers moving with fertilising rain over our tilled and our waste lands. (RV. I. 127.6) Tr. Sri Aurobindo

⁵ RV. V. 53.7

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being of the Yajamana is bathed in these Waters of rejuvenation and illumination.

The *speech* of the Maruts, however, is not of the ordinary kind. It requires a special faculty to be able to listen to the movements of self-expression of these Powers. Not every one can do it.

*Wherever the Maruts pass, they fill the way with clamour. A rare one hears them.*¹

When the developing forces of the life and the thought-energies are on the move, their capacities for self-expression in terms and forms appropriate to their kind are put into play in the stress of their growing might and freedom; and only some, the rare, the seer observes, can hear their report and benefit by it. The faculty of inner audition should have been opened up and trained in the course of the self-discipline for one to be able to recognise and receive their speech.

It is pertinent to ask whether this Rik would make a meaning if the sole truth of the Maruts is what is given the naturalist interpretation. If the Maruts were nothing more than the storms and thunder in physical Nature, then why is it that *only some* can hear their words? Surely every one can hear the sound and fury of the elemental winds!

The Maruts are luminous not only in their own form, but in their weapons as well.

*Thou, O Agni, was the first Angiras, the seer and auspicious friend, a god, of the gods, in the law of thy working the Maruts with their shining spears: were born, seers who do the work by the knowledge.*²

The Angirasas are the divine Flame powers who have the specific function of aiding Indra, the Lord of the Divine Mind in recovering the lost Light from the dark caves of its captors. And Agni, the God who befriends the other Gods by carrying to them the offerings of man, in Sacrifice and preparing the field here on earth for their manifestation, says the seer, is the original Flame of whom the Angirasas are the off-shoots. He it is,

¹ यद्ध यन्ति मरुतः सं ह ब्रुवतेऽध्वना । शृणोति कच्चिदेषाम् ॥ (RV. I. 37.13)

² त्वमग्ने प्रथमो अङ्गिरा ऋषिर्देवो देवानामभवः शिवः सखा ।

तव व्रते कवयो विद्वानापसोऽजायन्त मरुतो भ्राजदृष्टयः ॥ (RV. I. 31.1). Tr.

Sri Aurobindo

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who by the force of his Will and Knowledge—he is a seer, *ṛṣi*—makes it possible for Indra to appear, undertake and lead to a successful culmination the battle for the Light. And the Maruts, the awakened powers of subtle life and thought are brought into being in the wake of the functioning of Agni, the burning of the Flame of the Seer-Will. They are roused and released from the torpidity in which they are normally submerged, and set into action. They partake of both the elements, the light of knowledge and the force of action of Agni; hence it is his greatness, his glory that they blazon when they manifest.¹ Not only they, but their weapons also are bright, their spears luminous because they are activated by a common energism raised to a white-heat of self-transcending power. The purified force of life that constitutes the substance of their being is charged with the luminous glow of the governing knowledge, *vidmanā*, the knowledge with which these *seers* proceed to work. Hence their form, their robe, their weapons are all shining² and effective. “No half-lights, no impotent things are they, but mighty in aggression and puissant to attain. Spears of light they hold and they loose them from their hands at the children of Darkenss; the flashing lightnings of the Thought-gods search the night and the light of heaven rises of itself on our souls at their battle-call.” (Sri Aurobindo).

They move in chariots and these are drawn, significantly, by antelopes, the deer that fleet unmatched. This is how Rishi Kanva describes the legions of the Hosts:

*Who, with spotted deer, with weapons and revealing cries, are self-luminous.*³

Each of the Gods has his own characteristic vehicle, *vāhana*; and the deer, the antelope, are the recognised carriers of the Maruts. These swift-footed animals represent the rapidly moving forces, on the plane of life, who speed the gods on their mission. Speed is their main feature. We must not fail to note the other epithets also that are used, each with a significance of its own. Sri Kapali Sastry notes in his commentary:

¹ व्रातंव्रातं गणं गणं सुशस्तिभिरग्नेः . . . गन्तारो यज्ञं

Host upon host, troop upon troop with their proclamings of the Fire...they come (RV, III. 26.6) Tr. Sri Aurobindo

² ये अञ्जिषु ये वाशीषु स्वभानवः स्रक्षु स्वमेषु । श्रया रथेषु धन्वसु ॥

They who shine self-luminous in decorations, in arms, in wreaths, in cuirass, in chariots in bows. (RV. V. 53.4)

³ ये पृषतीभिः ऋष्टिभिः अग्निं साकं वाशीभिरञ्जिभिः । अजायन्त स्वभानवः ॥ (RV. I. 37.2)

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The antelopes celebrated for their storm-wind rush carry the host of the Maruts who are themselves born of the life-region and who endow the thought-movements with a divine velocity. The seeings, *ṛṣṭayah*, (*ṛṣater-darśanārthāt*) are weapons by reason of their piercing character. Of the Maruts of tempestuous speed, the very seeings become the weapons of aggression. Revealing, *anjibhih*, is to be taken in apposition with *vāśibhih*, words, cries. The words, the speeches arise out of the violent rush of the Maruts, break open and reveal to sight or illumine things that are deep-seated or concealed. Thus have the Maruts manifested themselves to the Rishi in Yajna, Sacrifice, with their *revealing cries* and full of the rays of the Light of Consciousness appropriate to their nature.¹

To take another Rik describing the antelopes of the Maruts.

*Ye to your chariot have yoked the spotted deer close; the red one between them draws.*²

Here we must note the drawers of the carriage are mentioned as three in number, obviously to correspond to the three principles or levels of the being of man viz. the body, the life and the mind. These Powers of upward movement, the Maruts, need the support of the energies of all the three parts of the being to proceed on their eventful journey. Of these three, says the Rishi, the middle one, the one in red hue takes the lead and thrusts forward; there can be no mistaking that this *rohita*, the *red* antelope, signifies a figure of the life-force embodying the power of action and enjoyment. It is this *vāhana* of life-energy laden with a special stress of the force of effectuation and joy that plays a preeminent role in speeding the car of the Maruts, with its compeers of the other two planes on either side to aid it.³

Thus equipped the Maruts arrive in their phalanx.

Like Agni with flashing splendour, gold-breasted, like tempest-blasts, self-moving, swift to lend their aid;

*As best of all foreknowers, excellent to guide, like Somas, delight-giving⁴ to him who follows the Law.*⁵

¹ *Rig Veda Bhashya* p. 376

² उपो रथेषु पृषतीर्युग्ध्वं प्रष्टिर्वहति रोहितः । (RV. I. 39.6)

³ Vide *Rig Veda Bhashya* p. 393

⁴ Or, good to guard

⁵ अग्निर्न ये भ्राजसा रुक्मवक्षसो वातासो न स्वयुजः सद्य ऊतयः ।

प्रज्ञातारो न ज्येष्ठाः सूतीतयः सुशर्माणो न सोमा ऋतं यते ॥ (RV. X. 78.2)

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Note the epithets signifying their brilliance of form, their protective armour of gold¹, their spontaneities and swiftnesses, their vision and their knowledge and their outpourings of joy. Note also that their benevolence is only for those who go by the Rita, the Law of Truth.

(To continue)

M. P. PANDIT

This is that might of thee, O Indra, which doers of the action speak of in their Words. They praise and guard thy energy dripping with light; the people of the city come (reach) to thee by their thinkings.

They by their good action come (reach) to Indra and have his guard, they in whose wine-offerings thou hast delight: even as I approach thee empty of delight, even as I come to thee in my leanness, so in us take thy delight, O Indra.

(*Rig Veda*)

Tr. Sri Aurobindo

“Gold is the concrete symbol of the higher light, the god of the Truth” (Sri Aurobindo). The Maruts are also described as gold-helmeted, *hiraṇya-śīprāḥ*; tiaras wrought of gold are laid upon their heads, *śīprāḥ śirṣasu vitatā hiraṇyayih* (RV. V. 54.11). That is, their summits are enveloped in the light of Truth.

THE LIFE DIVINE

(A SYNOPSIS)

THE DIVINE MAYA

CHAPTER XIII

JUST as the concentration of the seed holds in itself the potentiality of the whole organism, so the individual being is a concentrated centre of that Existence, Consciousness, Force and Delight of being which is intrinsically One.

All things have arisen from that Oneness; are that Oneness in their essence; and their goal is to manifest that Oneness in a multiplicity of individual formations. The aim of each individual therefore is to realise that perfection, that completeness, in harmony with the whole world-play.

We can conceive the world-play as a triple movement: first an involution and a self-absorption of conscious being into the density and infinite divisibility of substance; next an emergence of the self-imprisoned force into formal being, living being, thinking being; and finally a release of the formed thinking being into the free realisation of itself as the One and the Infinite at play in the world, and hence the recovery of the boundless existence-consciousness-bliss by the world.

This is the ancient truth of evolution in the universe; and by that truth are the modern findings illumined and widened.

The discovery of all things as Sachchidananda reveals the true Nature of Reality; but it does not explain the process or the Law by which Reality turns itself into phenomenon.

Seen from the point of view of Force alone (as in modern science) this Law seems to be one based on accidental or chance formation. But when we take into account the self-expression of Existence, and above all its self-perception in Conscious Being, there is revealed a guidance and a self-perceived aim.

This conception of a purposeful aim in Creation finds support in man's age-long belief in a Creator—a self-determining power in universal con-

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sciousness to perceive a certain Truth in itself and to bring that Truth into cosmic manifestation.

The Creator perceived in the old Semitic revelations was known to the Vedic seers by the name of Maya. This name was a symbolical representation (in old Saṁscrit) of a power that measures, delimits or forms. By the action of Maya phenomenal being emerges out of the Supreme Being.

The original Vedic symbolism indicated that there is a higher Maya—supramental—and a lower Maya that presides over the present mental nature. This important distinction was missed by the later, illusionist philosophers who regarded the lower Maya as the Creatrix of the world, and hence as the agent of unreality.

The view now presented is that the universe originates not in a universal Mind, but in a supramental Truth-consciousness beyond Mind.

For man, the mental being, the Truth-consciousness is the real mediator between the supreme Reality (or Absolute) and the phenomenal reality of the world. We thus realise that Mind is an instrument of the higher Truth-consciousness; that Mind serves a practical function; and that it is not the power which knows and guides the truth of universal existence.

The Truth-consciousness then is not an infinite Mind constituted in terms of mentality as we know it, but the seat of Divine Knowledge and the possessor of the Divine Will.

Mind is a limited instrument. Normally it sees phenomena from moment to moment; and these momentary views are but fragments of Time and Space. Extending its range it can conjecture on what is to be, but not with any certainty or exactitude.

Nihilism and Illusionism are the inevitable end-products of a knowledge based on Mind as the highest cosmic force. It is only when we see a Law and Knowledge beyond the mentality governed by appearances, that we realise that the world is a growing image of a divine Creation.

That is to say, only when we cease to reason and go deep into ourselves where the activity of mind is stilled, do we become aware of that other consciousness, and our eyes are opened to vast illimitable ranges of Knowledge to which Reason is but a messenger.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SUPERMIND AS CREATOR

The intermediary Power between the Supreme One and the created Many

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is a principle of active Will and Knowledge superior to mind, and is the true Creatrix of the worlds.

The supreme ideal for our evolving human consciousness seeking self-perfection is to discover permanently and make living that final harmony and truth. But there appears to be an impassable barrier, an apparent contradiction, between human mentality and the divine Supermind.

We have to realise that Supermind is the Creatrix of the world, and of Mind also. Therefore, however contrary Mind may have become, it must contain in essence the identical stuff of Supermind.

First let us see clearly what Supermind means; for it is a new word, though not a new conception. The cryptic verses of the Veda refer to Supermind as a vastness beyond the ordinary firmaments of our consciousness. It is a vast comprehensiveness, a luminous truth and harmony of being. Even the Gods are subsidiary powers of this supreme Truth-consciousness.

One important characteristic for the mind to grasp is that in Supermind there is no separation between the light of Knowledge and the force of Will. Also here are various channels by which the truths of Supermind come to us; one is through revelation (or seeing), and another is through inspiration (or hearing).

It has been discovered that our own division of knowledge into a subjective knowledge by identity, and an objective cognition by detachment, corresponds to a double function in Supermind; that of a comprehending Consciousness on the one hand, and an apprehending Consciousness on the other.

Thus Supermind, as the intermediary link between the Unity of Sachchidananda above and the dividing consciousness of Mind below, has both the all-comprehending power of consciousness of the former together with the detailed apprehending function of knowledge of the latter.

Supermind is the link that holds the two opposites—the immutable One above and the ever-changing Many below; and it is thus the beginning and end of all Creation.

Mind can only become complete by joining itself with Supermind. If it overpasses Supermind it arrives at the Transcendent Consciousness where the world appears as a Nothingness; if it ignores Supermind it remains entrammelled in its separative and divided view of the world, and ends up with an interminable Plurality.

Mind is a passage and not a culmination; and Supermind is the link which reconciles our experience of the indivisible Unity beyond, with our

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fragmented mental experience here below. We can thus perceive the significant relation of Supermind to man more clearly.

Beyond Time is the original self-concentration, the indivisible One; while in apparent contradiction to that Supreme Unity is Mind's conception of the universe,—an apparent disintegration of that Unity. Joining these two is the intermediary divine Power of Supermind which upholds the apparent disintegration and maintains a harmony, a cosmos, where mind sees only chaos and disharmony.

We can now see the working of Supermind more clearly. Supermind creates but does not divide. Evolution has a corresponding action in Involution, by which Unity is contained within as the latent potentiality of all things. Thus we discover that the All is in each, as well as each in the All.

One Will, a Knowledge-Force of Conscious-Being, maintains the multifarious possibilities of cosmos in a unified law of process and aim. Such law we see in the process of Nature. Nature is but the executive instrument; behind is the Idea (the Real-Idea) which belongs to the Truth-consciousness.

Idea, as the attribute of Supermind, is not something abstract or detached from reality as is characteristic of mind, but is itself reality. In Supermind there is no separation of reality from thought or idea. The Idea and the creative process are one.

The creative movement of Supermind has three effects: Being which results in substance; Consciousness which comes forth in knowledge; and Will that is directed into force. Thus the Idea in Supermind is inseparable from the instigating Will, and also inseparable from the resultant substance. The creative Power is hence termed the Real-Idea.

Supermind is supremely the creator of harmony—a harmony within and between all things—which reveals it ultimately as the infallible and omniscient creative principle of God's Will.

CHAPTER XV

THE SUPREME TRUTH-CONSCIOUSNESS

Supermind embodies the truth of the religious conception of God—the Lord and Creator of the world. This is not the anthropomorphic conception, which is but a magnified Man, a projection of the ego, but the conception of a Conscious-Being.

The Divine is both Personal and Impersonal, but it is the impersonal

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and not the psychological truth of the divine Consciousness that we are at present seeking to fathom.

The whole harmony of Cosmos depends on the fact that the Truth-consciousness is everywhere an ordering self-knowledge. It is the pre-determining Idea in the very seed of things without which the evolution of the world as an inter-related harmony, would not be possible.

From the beginning the whole development of Creation is predetermined according to the original inherent Truth; and by it the world unfolds. This unfolding gives rise to succession of Time, and relation in Space.

But where Mind ordinarily views Time as a succession from past to future, and Space as an extension measured out by divisibility of substance, the conception above Mind sees Time and Space as the one Conscious-Being viewing itself in extension, subjectively as Time, objectively as Space. It is possible for Mind to go beyond its ordinary conception and realise Time and Space as two inter-related aspects of the universal force of Consciousness. In a world of change and intershock of forces Time and Space are realities inseparable from each other.

As conceived by Supermind, all is a progressive harmony into which Supermind has entered and which it wholly embraces. Thus each thing in Nature, animate or inanimate, is governed by an indwelling Vision and Power, obeying subconsciously or half-consciously the real-idea of the divine Supermind within it.

The Knowledge that belongs to Supermind is a Knowledge of complete Unity and Wholeness. Mental intelligence can only follow step by step the working of this higher knowledge; Supermind comprehends all things because it is one with all.

The action of mentality separates the knower from the known and produces an artificial knowledge. Only when the knower possesses that which it seeks to know in a unity of consciousness, do we arrive at a union of the apprehending and comprehending consciousness. This is as yet alien to the present dividing activity of mind.

Mind's vision is based on an egocentric outlook which separates the reality of a subjective view from the vast objectivity that stands outside its narrow orbit.

We have to realise that just as Cosmos can only be explained by that which stands above Cosmos, so Creation can only be explained by the creative Power of Supermind that has entered into and embraces Creation. To enter into the consciousness of this all-comprehending Power, we have

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to completely lose the ordinary separative outlook, and see the triple aspects of Supermind as a single Truth. Only thus can we realise both the origin of mentality, and the meaning of this world of Mind, Life and Matter.

The source of this lower world of Mind, Life and Matter, which has been separated from the Perfection beyond, resides in a secondary power of Supermind. This is its projecting and apprehending Consciousness.

The creation of the phenomenal world may thus be seen as three steps. First, the division between the Lord or Creator and His force. Secondly the reproduction of this primary division throughout creation, resulting in the division between the soul-centres and Nature. Thirdly the soul itself becomes submerged, and the separative consciousness comes into being. This is the real beginning of the Ignorance, characterised by Mind's separation from the vast wideness of the Truth-consciousness.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE TRIPLE STATUS OF SUPERMIND

Before proceeding to the individual soul-vision of the world, let us resume what has been realised of the process of the Creator Himself, the Creation.

All existence is one Being, and its Nature is the interplay of Consciousness, Force and Delight. It is the eternal play, the Bliss of the Divine Consciousness; and the concentrated essence of this Bliss is our own real self, which has to be unveiled and released from the domination of the false ego, the centre of our present mentality.

In asserting these two opposite entities—the truth of the unity of the Divine Nature on the one hand, and the falseness or ignorance of the divided mentality on the other—we have to be cognisant of the reconciling link between them, in order that the ignorance may be transformed and not merely abolished.

This intermediary link is the Truth-consciousness or Supermind, which is the true Origin, the Divine Creator of mentality and the world. Supermind operates by the Divine Law—the Real-Idea—which carries with it the Conscious-Force of the Divine Nature.

Thus the Divine Conscious-Force (or Knowledge-Will) has entered into the essence of things; it is even in the midst of apparent Ignorance, though it is obscured by the latter.

Supermind is indeed the supreme creative instrument of the Divine

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Nature, while Mind is a subsidiary instrument of Supermind. Supermind is the Being of the Divine Consciousness in its creative aspect, what we call God, the Creator of Space and Time. Consciousness (Knowledge) and Force (Will) are the inseparable aspects of that divine Power.

Because our outlook is yet limited, partial and divided, we see disharmony where all is indeed one and a harmony. We have to regain the Oneness of the Divine Consciousness, which is founded on the triple status of its creative action.

The first and primary poise of Supermind is the all-embracing Oneness where there is yet no division. All things are, in this poise, manifestations and forms of oneness with Spirit.

In the second poise the Divine Consciousness stands back from the movement and projects an apprehending consciousness, which inhabits and distributes itself in its created forms. It would be the same everywhere in soul-essence, but varying in soul-form.

This is the individual Divine (distinct from the universal Divine). Here the individual Divine would envisage its existence as a soul-form and soul-existence of the One. By the comprehending action of consciousness it would enjoy its unity with the One and with all soul-forms. By the frontal apprehending action it would enjoy its individual movement and its relations of free difference both with the One and with all its forms.

A third poise of Supermind would make the individual play of relation with the universal its dominant experience; but the realisation of utter unity with them would not be lost. This tertiary poise is the basis out of which dualism and the separative existence spring.

We have to note also that there is no break in the soul's consciousness in its descent from the tertiary poise into the Ignorance where the Many becomes the real and dominant fact of experience. The spiritualised individual would thus see the differentiation of the world movement together with the stable unity as the lower and upper poles of the same truth.

There is no falsehood or illusion in any of these three poises of Supermind. At the most there is only a priority of consciousness, extending from the One to the Many and returning from the Many to the One.

Thus it is only the partiality of our mentality that sees the Creator or the Creation as an illusion; or that declares that an irreconcilable duality is the finality of existence.

N. PEARSON

THE HUMAN CYCLE

(AN ABRIDGEMENT)

CHAPTER XIV

THE SUPRARATIONAL BEAUTY

REASON may be an insufficient help in dealing with religion but in other spheres of human consciousness and human activity it may act as a sovereign. But this too does not turn out in the end to be true. This is specially evident in the two realms of the ethical and aesthetic being in man. Starting from the infrarational parts of our being, the instinct and impulse for beauty begin with much imperfection and impurity. Here reason comes to distinguish, to enlighten, to correct. But it is only in a middle plane of our aesthetic seeking and activity that it operates. The creation of beauty in poetry and art does not fall within the sovereignty or even within the sphere of reason. Periods of artistic creation in which reason has ruled have achieved work of a certain greatness, but of intellectual greatness and perfection of technique rather than a supreme inspired and revealing beauty. It claimed for itself the name of classical art; but the claim is of doubtful validity. The discrimination which all artistic work must possess is not an intellectual self-criticism or an obedience to rules imposed from outside, but itself creative, intuitive, or part of the vision. In the appreciation of beauty it has a part, but it is not even there the supreme judge or law-giver. We see this in the history of the development of literary and artistic criticism. In the earliest stages appreciation is instinctive, natural, it does not attempt to give an account of itself to the thinking intelligence. When reason applies itself to the task it not only tries to record the nature of the response but to analyse, to find out a grammar of technique, a fixed code of Shastra. A time comes when the creator of beauty revolts against this. The conscious appreciation of beauty reaches its highest point when the action of the intuitive mind completes the action of the rational intelligence and when it has been sufficiently trained and developed can take up always the

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work of the intellect and do it much better. What has been said of great creative art applies to all beauty, beauty in Nature, beauty in life as well as beauty in art. We find in the end the place of reason and the limit of its achievement are precisely of the same kind in regard to beauty as in regard to religion. And for the same reason, for it is in truth seeking, as in religion, for the Divine, the All-Beautiful in man, in nature, in life, in thought, in art.

CHAPTER XV

THE SUPRARATIONAL GOOD

Through our religious and aesthetic being we find the universality of a principle and a law, a truth on which the sages have always agreed. But in other spheres of life, what by an irony of ignorance we call especially practical life, we are less ready to acknowledge this. For even there we must arrive eventually at the highest truth—that all active being is a seeking for God, Reality, the Divine. It is in our ethical being that this becomes most readily apparent, in spite of the tinkering of reason as in the utilitarian, hedonistic or socialistic systems. Yet each of these systems has a truth behind their false constructions. Utility is a fundamental principle of existence, if one could only find the way and be always sure of what is the real good of all. And though pleasure may be a subconscious motive to the pursuit of virtue, the action of the ethical man is not motivated by even an inner pleasure, but by a call of his being, the necessity of an ideal, the figure of an absolute standard. In the recorded history of our ascent this does not at first appear clearly, does not appear perhaps at all: there the evolution of man in society may seem to be the determining cause of his ethical evolution. But that this is not the core of the matter is shown by the fact that the ethical demand does not always square with the social demand, nor the ethical standard always coincide with the social standard.

Our ethical impulses and activities begin like the rest in the infrarational and take their rise from the subconscious. Man obeys the law at first without any inquiry into the why and wherefore; later on the reason labours to make us understand what the impulses and instincts seek after, but in the end these ethical ideas and this intelligent will escape from its hold and soar up beyond its province. For the ethical being like the rest is a growth and seeking towards the absolute, the divine, which can only be attained securely in

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the suprarational. In fact ethics is not in its essence a calculation of good and evil in the action or the laboured effort to be blameless according to standards of the world, it is an attempt to grow into the divine nature. Such was the supreme aim of the ancient sages who had the wisdom which rational man and rational society have rejected because it was too high a truth for the comprehension of the reason and for the powers of the normal limited human will too bold and immense, too infinite an effort. It is with the cult of the Good, as with the cult of the Beautiful and the cult of the spiritual, the aim is man's rising from an infrarational through the reason to a supramental consummation.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SUPRARATIONAL ULTIMATE OF LIFE

IN all the higher powers of his life man may be said to be seeking for God. But all this seems something above our normal and usual being. For itself society is content to follow mainly after its own inherent principle of vital satisfaction, vital necessity and utility, efficiency. The reason is that here we get to another power, the life-power which, even if we recognise it as lower in the scale, still insists on its own reality and has not only the right to exist but the right to satisfy itself and be fulfilled. The modern European idea of society is founded upon this vital dynamism. This is the whole significance of the civilisation of the nineteenth century. Life in society consists, for the practical human instincts, in three activities, the domestic and social life of man, his economic activity as a producer, wealth-getter and consumer and his political status and action. The ancients held a different, indeed a diametrically opposite view. Although they recognised the immense importance of the primary activities, in Asia the social most, in Europe the political, yet they are man's first business, and not his chief business. The ancients regarded this life as an occasion for the development of the rational, the ethical, the aesthetic, the spiritual being. Greece and Rome laid stress on the first three alone, Asia went further. On this a great deal hangs; for if the practical and vitalistic view of life and society is the right one, then our idea that life is a seeking for God and for the highest self and that society too must make that its principle cannot stand. Therefore on this great primary thing we must look with care to see what it is in its reality as well as what it is in its appearance.

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The primary impulse of life is individualistic and makes family, social and national life a means for the greater satisfaction of the vital individual. In extreme cases the individual resorts to a primitive anti-social feeling but in modern times these cases grow rarer. In a collectivist society even the refuge of an inner seclusion may be taken away from us.

What account are the higher parts of man's being—his ethics and religion especially—to make with this vital instinct or with its gigantic modern developments? Should it be one of recoil, of almost complete hostility as it so often is? Up to a certain point this recoil has its uses, but it tends, if not to kill, to discourage the vital instincts and the energetic reaction to force and circumstance. Properly looked at the vital instinct has its rich elements, here too are high-reaching gods, masked but still resplendent. In modern times reason, not as philosophy but as science, has increasingly taken it up for perfection. These endeavours cannot be entirely successful if our theory of life is right, if life holds the imprisoned suprarational in it, then it must have the instinctive reaching out for something divine, absolute and infinite which is concealed in its blind strivings. The first mark of the suprarational is the growth of absolute ideals. The absolute vital ideals must be of that nature. Nowhere are they wanting. In the domestic, social, economic, even political life we find hints of these. Through the two powers of competition and co-operation they are stumbling forward towards some realisation of power and unity. For the Divine in life is Power possessed of self-mastery, but also of mastery of His world, and man and mankind move towards the conquest of their world and their environment. And again the Divine fulfilment here is and must be oneness, and the ideal of human unity however dim and far-off is coming slowly into sight.

To assist in this growth Life-Nature enforces on her human instrument ego-enlarging, ego-exceeding, even ego-destroying instincts and movements which combat and correct the smaller self-affirming instincts and movements. And though the structure arrived at by reason is always partial, precarious and temporary, the ideal and practical reason of man labours to find amidst all this the right law of life and action.

The process of life through a first obscure and confused effort of self-finding is the inevitable result of its beginnings in an apparent Inconscience; and yet we see that this unconscious Energy does at every step the works of a vast and minute Intelligence. This betrays the hidden truth and justifies the urge towards the pleasure, happiness, delight, divine bliss and

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ecstasy inexplicably born out of an insensitive Nihil. But the Inconscient, if a mask, is an effective mask, of the Spirit; it imposes on the evolving life and soul the law of a difficult emergence, of fragmentation. Only when it rises and widens out of the ego, the limited separative consciousness into the oneness of the liberated spirit, can it escape from the results of its growth out of the Inconscient. Life cannot arrive at its secret ultimates by following its first infrarational motive forces of instinct and desire. But neither can human reason give it what it searches after. The ultimates of life are spiritual and only in the full light of the liberated self and spirit can it achieve them. There is then a suprarational ultimate of Life no less than a suprarational Truth, Good and Beauty. The endeavour to reach it is the spiritual meaning of this seeking and striving Life-Nature.

SISIR KUMAR GHOSH

With that opulent pleasure which is thine, O Indra most full of the plentitudes, awake in us as our companion of the delight for our growth, for the giving of the enjoyment, O slayer of the Coverer.

(Rig Veda)

Tr. Sri Aurobindo

REVIEW

The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, by *Dhirendra Mohan Datta*. Pub. The University of Wisconsin Press, 811 State Street, Madison. Wisconsin (U.S.A.) Pp. 154+ix, Price \$ 2.50

The title of the book gives rise to the question: Did Mahatma Gandhi have a philosophy of his own? Did he perceive any idea-truths in the manner of the Thinkers in the West? Or did he realise any of the verities of the soul and systematise them in the language of the intellect, as is the way of genuine philosophers in India? The author anticipates this natural query and answers: "Gandhi was not an originator of new ideas, nor could his ideas be regarded as constituting a system of philosophy in the academic sense of the term....He learned what he calls 'the eternal truths' from the greatest traditional religious and philosophical teachers of the world" (p. 21). And from what he learnt, he went on to select such of the precepts as appealed to his mind and heart and based his own life on the synthesis so formed. The author has undertaken to "find out the basic elements of that outlook, and present them under the usually accepted topics of philosophy, trying to set them into a coherent system, so far as possible." Himself a practised expositor of Philosophies, and what is more, with the sympathy and understanding born of his association with the leader in the most impressionable years of his life, it is no surprise that Dr. Datta has done full justice to his subject, or even more.

He first gives a rapid account of the environments in which Gandhiji's life was moulded and traces the important influences that went to form the main strands of his outlook on life viz. the traditions of the Vaishnava and the Jaina Faith which held—and still do—such powerful sway in the land of his birth and growth, Kathiawar (p. 9); Tolstoy and Ruskin by their new interpretation of Christianity (p. 13); Henry David Thoreau, the American social reformer (P. 14); and the study of the Gita. He then proceeds to arrange the ideas and thoughts of Gandhiji, spread all over his extensive writings and speeches, under the regular classifications of Philosophy: God, World, Man; Morals, Society, Politics, and rounds up the work with a

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brief chapter on the dangers that face mankind today and the way in which it is best possible to meet and save the situation.

Dr. Datta observes that the crisis "has really originated from the many new moral problems caused by the too sudden developments of science, technology, and industrialised society, and the too sudden coming together of the different nations through rapid transportation. Humanity has not had enough time for moral adjustment to the overwhelming atmosphere of new truths about nature and mind, nor has it had time to handle with wise control the enormous physical powers achieved by technology. The present crisis is the danger signal that urgently calls for the development of moral powers commensurate with the physical and mental developments." (p. 152). In pointing out that the solution of the problem is to be sought on a level other and higher than the economic, political or sociological, the author indeed hits the nail but misses its head when he diagnoses the malady to be of a *moral* character and prescribes the panacea of the ethicist. For, Nature—human nature—presents a problem which is wider and whose roots go much deeper than those levels of our being where alone moral values and standards can legitimately obtain; and the solution to be effective has got to be correspondingly exhaustive and radical. The key lies not in the canons of Ethics but in the fulfilment of the deeper urges of the soul within. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

"To develop the sattvic part of our nature, a nature of light, understanding, balance, harmony, sympathy, good-will, kindness, fellow-feeling, self-control, rightly ordered and harmonised action, is the best we can do in the limits of the mental formation, but it is a stage and not the goal of our growth of being. These are solutions by the way, necessary means for a partial dealing with this root difficulty; provisional standards and devices given us as a temporary help and guidance because the true and total solution is beyond our present capacity and can only come when we have sufficiently evolved to see it and make it our main endeavour.

The true solution can intervene only when by our spiritual growth we can become one self with all beings, know them as part of our self, deal with them as if they were our other selves; for then the division is healed, the law of separate self-affirmation leading by itself to affirmation against or at the expense of others is enlarged and liberated by adding to it the law of our self-affirmation for others and our self-finding in their self-finding and self-realisation. It has been made a rule of religious ethics to act in a spirit of universal compassion, to love one's neighbour as oneself, to do to others

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as one would have them do to us, to feel the joy and grief of others as one's own; but no man living in his ego is able truly and perfectly to do these things, he can only accept them as a demand of his mind, as an aspiration of his heart, an effort of his will to live by a high standard and modify by a sincere endeavour his crude ego-nature. It is when others are known and felt intimately as oneself that this ideal can become a natural and spontaneous rule of our living and be realised in practice as in principle... To be ourselves liberated from ego and realise our true selves is the first necessity; all else can be achieved as a luminous result, a necessary consequence. That is one reason why a spiritual call must be accepted as imperative and take precedence over all other claims, intellectual, ethical, social, that belong to the domain of the Ignorance. For the mental law of good abides in that domain and can only modify and palliate; nothing can be a sufficient substitute for the spiritual change that can realise the true and integral good because through the spirit we come to the root of action and existence."¹

M. P. PANDIT

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Chapter XIV

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